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OUTLINE STUDIES

IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT

CATHOLIC EPISTLES—JAMES, I AND II
PETER, I, II, III JOHN, AND JUDE

BY

WILLIAM G. MOOREHEAD

Professor in the Xenia Theological Seminary

“Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”

NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON

AND

EDINBURGH

com
973

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PUBLICATION

PITTSBURGH, PA.

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EPISTLE OF JAMES

The seven epistles, commonly called Catholic or General, are the subjects of the present study. With the epistle of James we are first to deal.

Can the James whose name is attached to this epistle be identified? Several persons bearing the name are mentioned in the New Testament, *e. g.*, James the son of Zebedee John's brother, James the son of Alphaeus, James the Less, and James the Lord's brother. There is good reason to regard James the son of Alphaeus and James the Less as one and the same person (cf. Mark xv: 40; xvi: 1; John xix: 25). Three of the name appear to be distinguished from each other, viz.: James the son of Zebedee, James the son of Alphaeus, and James the Lord's brother.

Which of these three was the writer of the epistle? James the son of Zebedee is excluded by the fact that it was written probably after his martyrdom by Herod, A. D. 44. James the son of Alphaeus seems also to be excluded because there is no evidence that he was specially prominent as a teacher in Jerusalem, whereas the contents of the epistle and the Acts attest the pres-

ence of a James in the holy city who held a conspicuous and influential place. Besides, the writer of the epistle does not call himself an apostle; he speaks of himself simply as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (i: 1). Ordinarily, when a writer of an epistle gives his name he affixes also his title. Now James son of Alphaeus was an apostle, but James the Lord's brother was not. In Gal. i: 19 he seems to be included in the number, but the construction of the sentence in that place does not warrant such a conclusion: "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." The margin of the Revised Version reads, "but only James the Lord's brother," which sets him apart from the apostle Peter whom Paul visited on this occasion. (Cf. Rom. xiv: 14; Luke iv: 26, 27, for a like construction.) In 1 Cor. xv: 7—"then he appeared to James"—the order of the words seems to imply that James is rather to be distinguished from than included among the apostles. Had James son of Alphaeus written this letter he would in all probability have inserted his title of apostle. Since this is absent, the inference seems legitimate that the writer was not an apostle. Besides, Jude describes himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (ver. 1)—language which denotes that Jude anticipates a respectful hearing of his message because of his relationship to the influential James. In the family of Joseph and Mary there were both a James and a Jude (Mark vi: 3), and it is altogether likely that the two named in Jude's epistle were precisely these two sons, and

hence the "Lord's brothers." But neither of them was an apostle, though bound to the Lord Jesus by the closest ties, as we shall presently see.

On the whole, the evidence points unmistakably to James "the Lord's brother" (Gal. i: 19) as the author of our epistle. He was one of the most conspicuous members of the apostolic church. He was the chief pastor and principal teacher of the church of Jerusalem. It was he who with Peter and John gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas (Gal. ii: 9), to whom Peter sent the tidings of his deliverance from prison (Acts xii: 17), and who, together with the elders, received Paul and his companions on their arrival in Jerusalem with the gifts of Gentile churches for the needy saints (Acts xxi: 18). It was this James who took so prominent a part in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv), and who offered the resolution, as we moderns would say, which was unanimously adopted by that assembly. Peter at Antioch for a time held fellowship with Gentile Christians, but when certain came from James he drew back and refused longer to eat with them, so great was James' influence (Gal. ii: 11, 12).

But now what relationship is meant by the expression, "the Lord's brother?" Frequent mention is made of the Lord's brethren (Matt. xii: 46; Mark vi: 3; John vii: 3, 5; I Cor. ix: 5; Gal. i: 19). In Mark vi: 3 we read, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" This was said by the people of Nazareth who were well acquainted

with the family and with Jesus' relation to it. They speak of His brothers, naming them, and of His sisters, and of His mother. In Acts i: 14 "his brethren" are distinguished from the apostles, from the disciples, and from the mother Mary. What kinship did He sustain to these "brothers" and "sisters?" Cousins of Jesus they could hardly be, for the term "brother" is never used in this sense in the New Testament. If they were the children of Cleopas (Alphaeus), whose wife was Mary (John xix: 25), who was sister to Mary the mother of Jesus, as Jerome and many after him believe, then we have two sisters of the same name, a most unlikely thing. But the text in John xix: 25 does not necessarily mean that the mother's sister was the wife of Cleopas; rather, we understand John to say this—"His mother and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene." Four women are here mentioned, not three. Mark xv: 40 informs us that one of the women who beheld the crucifixion was Salome, and John does not name her because she was his own mother, and she was sister to Jesus' mother.

The natural inference from the biblical statements as to our Lord's brethren is this: His brothers and sisters were the children of Joseph and Mary born to them after the birth of Jesus. The intelligent reader of the Bible, uninfluenced by preconceptions, would certainly infer so much. It was superstitious reverence for the mother of Jesus and for the dogma of her perpetual virginity that led men to affix other meanings to the terms "brother," "brethren" and "sisters" than

the natural one. Accordingly, the conjecture is that Joseph was a widower when he and Mary were married, and that he had sons and daughters by a former wife, and these were His "brethren." There is no hint in Scripture of this: it is pure conjecture. He who holds that Psalm lxix is Messianic, and that it in point of fact expresses the feelings and experiences of the Messiah, that in it Messiah does actually speak, as the writer unhesitatingly does, has a scriptural definition of the Lord's "brethren:" "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien to my mother's children," Psalms lxix: 8; cf. Luke ii: 7—"her firstborn son."

The Lord's brethren did not receive Him as Messiah. John says, "Even his brethren did not believe on him" (John vii: 3-5). Mark informs us that at one time they entertained serious doubts as to His sanity; they thought He was "beside himself," and with the mother Mary they sought to arrest Him and to take Him home with them (Mark iii: 21, 31). It is noteworthy that it was but a few months before His crucifixion when John affirms the disbelief of Jesus' brethren. Indeed, it seems that it was not until He was risen from the dead these "brethren" cordially received Him as Messiah and were identified with the apostles and disciples (Acts i: 13-15). It is thought by some, Lightfoot among the number, that James, the Lord's brother, was converted when the risen Saviour appeared to him (1 Cor. xv: 7). If, therefore, James the son of Alphaeus and James the Lord's brother are identical and that it was he who wrote our epistle, it

follows that he was both a disciple and apostle before he was a believer in Christ during the whole period of the public ministry, and even up to and beyond the crucifixion—which appears to us quite an untenable position.

Legends and traditions have gathered about the name of James, most of which are fanciful and un-historical. Some things have been preserved of him that may have some foundation of truth. It is related that he was called by the people The Just, a tribute to his uprightness and integrity. He was a thorough Israelite, a strict observer of the Law, but not a mere formalist. His course in the Jerusalem Council proves he was tolerant and had a large and wise view of Christian liberty. In all essentials he was in complete accord with Paul (Acts xxi: 18-26).

There is a story connected with the Lord's appearing to James after the resurrection which, however doubtful, is worth relating: At Jesus' death James vowed he would eat no bread until he saw Him risen from the dead. When the Saviour appeared to him He said, "My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep." He died as a martyr.

James addresses the Twelve Tribes of the Dispersion (i: 1). The term Dispersion is very comprehensive. Jews were found everywhere throughout the vast Roman Empire, and even beyond its limits. We know from Acts ii: 9-11 that devout Hebrews came from Elam in the far east and from Rome in the west to be present at the annual feast of the Passover held

in Jerusalem. Christians were found among these dispersed tribes, and these James addresses in much of the spirit and temper of an Old Testament prophet.

At first sight the epistle appears to be entirely legal. It reminds us of portions of Deuteronomy and of Proverbs. As is well known, Luther objected to it mainly on this score, calling it "a right strawy epistle." So did Erasmus, Cardinal Cajetan and others. It must be remembered that James wrote to believing Jews who still held fast to Moses and the Law. They needed just such exhortations and warnings as he so frequently and powerfully employs. Faith, obedience, humility, patience and love were graces they lacked and needed, and these he urges on them with the authority and force of a teacher in Israel.

Furthermore, the epistle is an echo of the Saviour's teaching. It is closely connected with the Sermon on the Mount. "There is scarcely a thought in it which cannot be traced to Christ's personal teaching. If John has lain on the Saviour's bosom, James has sat at His feet" (Scott). There are more than fifteen unmistakable references in it to the truths taught in the Sermon, and in some instances the correspondence is almost verbally exact.

It was written at Jerusalem. The date is not so easily fixed. Some things, however, may help to locate the time with proximate certainty. It is quite probable that James the Lord's brother was martyred about A. D. 62. The apostle Peter, in his first epistle,

quotes largely from James (cf. I Peter i: 6, 7; James i: 2; I Peter i: 24; James i: 10, 11; I Peter iv: 8; James v: 20; I Peter v: 5, 6, 8; James iv: 6, 7). At the time Peter wrote James' letter must have been well known, and accredited as both genuine and authoritative. Accordingly, it must have been written some years before First Peter.

The epistle moves within the circle of Judaic Christianity, and it belongs to its first stage. Certain expressions in it could be used with great effect by the Judaizers to impose their legalistic dogmas on Gentile believers, *e. g.* (ii: 10), "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This statement could be easily perverted into the support of a rigorous observance of the Mosaic rites. That the Judaizers did thus employ such passages appears evident from Acts xv: 24. It is there asserted that some had gone from Jerusalem to Antioch and other places whose chief aim it was to impose Judaism on Gentile Christians, and they claimed that James and other influential disciples sanctioned their teaching. But the claim is denied—"To whom we gave no commandment." The inference seems legitimate that the epistle was written before the meeting of the Council held in Jerusalem, *i. e.*, before A. D. 51. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that James never once alludes to the controversy at Antioch; never once does he mention circumcision, the heart of that bitter contention. What he vigorously insists on are moral precepts and Christian duties common to all believers, Jew and Gentile alike, and not

at all on ceremonial ordinances or Hebrew rites. Hence the date probably precedes A. D. 51. Somewhere between A. D. 45-51 it probably lies:—(Mayor, Huther, Neander, Plumtre, Purves).

The epistle of James is very likely the oldest document in the New Testament canon. It is noteworthy that within sixteen years of our Lord's resurrection the Gospel had penetrated the widely scattered people of Israel. James himself told Paul that there were "many thousands" who believed, and he spoke only of Jerusalem. How many more there must have been within the Roman Empire we may readily infer. The Lord's brother had good reason to address his letter to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion.

Another thing worthy of note is, that James does not controvert Paul's doctrine as to justification by faith apart from works. The controversy between Paul and the Judaizers is of later date than this epistle. Both Romans and Galatians were written some years after James. Hence the one did not write against the other, nor is there antagonism in their views of truth, as later on in this study we shall see.

The language of the epistle is strong and beautiful. It abounds in vivid imagery, in short, sententious utterances. With a single stroke of his pen James commends a duty, scourges a fault, denounces wrong, exalts virtue, and crowns patience and faith with transcendent glory. James differs widely from Paul both in style and thought. The imagery of Paul is drawn almost exclusively from the employments of men, as, *e. g.*, military life, agriculture, architecture, and the

contests of the stadium and of the gymnasium, while the metaphors of James are taken almost entirely from the phenomena of nature. There are more images of this sort in this short epistle than in all the writings of Paul put together. Note how graphic these are: the waves of the sea driven by the wind and tossed; the stately ship and the fierce winds; the flower of the grass; the sun risen with a burning heat; the bit and bridle of the horse; the small fire and the raging conflagration; beasts, birds, serpents; the fig, olive, vine; the salt and fresh water; the early and latter rain, the vanishing vapor, rust, and moth-eaten garments. Paul was a keen observer of the habits and ways of men: James was an eager student of nature, and saw in its varied phenomena a picture of humanity. Both spoke by the Spirit of God, but their inspiration did not annul the characteristic features of their minds.

ANALYSIS.

- I. Contentment with our lot, chap. i.
 1. Greeting, i: 1.
 2. Victory over temptation, i: 2-8.
 3. The lowly and the lofty, i: 9-11.
 4. Sin's genesis and issue—God's gift, i: 12-18.
 5. Receiving the word, i: 19-21.
 6. Hearers and doers of the word, i: 22-27.

- II. Instructions and admonitions, ii-iv: 12.
 1. As to respect of persons, ii: 1-13.
 2. As to a barren orthodoxy, ii: 14-26.
 3. As to the control of the tongue, iii: 1-12.
 4. As to jealousy and faction, iii: 13-18.
 5. As to pride, greed and censoriousness, iv: 1-12.

III. Denunciations, chaps. iv: 13-v: 6.

1. Against overweening confidence, iv: 13-17.
2. Against rich and oppressive sinners, v: 1-6.

IV. Concluding exhortations, chap. v: 7-20.

1. Patience, v: 7-11.
2. Rash assertions, v: 12.
3. Health and sickness, v: 13-20.

This analysis serves to show how practical and even personal the epistle is. It is ethical, not doctrinal. Yet doctrine, even the profoundest, underlies the personal appeals and the stern denunciations. It deals with actual conditions. It pours light into the professions and the practices of Christian Jews, and Gentiles as well. Living in the center of Judaism James saw the vices to which his countrymen were addicted, and he saw likewise that his flock was infected by the same hurtful evils, and so he must rescue them. Accordingly, he lifts up his voice, like one of Israel's prophets, to exhort, to rebuke, and to warn. He sometimes speaks with indignation, sometimes with sorrow, almost with tears, always with the deepest earnestness. He pours out what is uppermost in his thoughts and closest to his heart without waiting to connect his matter or to throw bridges across from one subject to another.

Beneath the abrupt style and sententious form of the epistle there is a paramount aim, a single purpose. James' design is to vindicate the genuineness of the Christian faith and life. He seeks to make Christians sincere and true. He protests against the semblance

of religion, against the profession of godliness without its possession. What he insists on is reality. He has no patience with a mere show of piety, with a **form** of godliness. He has a horror of cant. He heartily repudiates what is not real and vital. This, it is conceived, is the essence of James' teaching. He expresses it thus: "If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain" (i: 26). The key of the epistle is found in this sentence: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (i: 22). "What doth it profit if a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can that faith save him?" All this talk about faith—what is it worth? Words, words—nay, let us have realities.

With this clue in our hands let us study some of the prominent features of this Scripture.

I. Temptations and their uses, i: 2-4, 12-16. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations." What singular advice this is! Most people count trials a calamity; they are commonly dreaded, and always to be shunned. James thought otherwise. He looked on them as a means of Christian culture, as a positive blessing; and hence they should be welcomed with joy. Of course, suffering in itself brings no joy, but the reverse. It is of what the trials may through grace work out for the believer that they are to be counted a joy when they come. "Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience." A metal is tested in order to know its worth. But the trial of a dead thing is only

a test, whereas the trial of faith is the test of a living principle, and it issues in spiritual strength and energy. James calls it "patience," *i. e.*, endurance or steadfastness, the development of genuine character. So Paul also conceives of it (Rom. v: 3-5), a passage we may venture to paraphrase thus: We rejoice in our tribulations, because tribulation works out patient endurance, and patient endurance becomes a cause and works out an approved experience, and this next becomes a cause and works out hope, a hope that cannot shame nor disappoint us, for it is the fruit of grace and of the Spirit's action. The aim of Christian discipline is perfection, "that ye may be perfect and entire, in nothing lacking." Faith is the supreme condition of spiritual life and growth, and faith grows by use, by exercise, hence it is tried, put often to the test that it may become strong and vigorous. It is only thus it becomes fruitful. Because of what temptations mean and what they do and why they are sent the intelligent Christian ought to regard their approach with joy (cf. I Peter iv: 12, 13). It is a singular school we are sent to, and they are strange lessons which we are sometimes made to learn. But it is the best of all schools and the most profitable of all lessons. Jacob in his anguish said, "All these things are against me" (Gen. xlii: 36), but he was totally mistaken. What seemed to him to be unmixed evil turned out to be altogether good (cf. Rom. viii: 28; Heb. xii: 5-12). But often our distrust of God and our unworthy suspicions of Him rob His dealings with us of much of their value. Pain, loss, suffering, are not joyous

things, but grievous, "nevertheless afterwards they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." How many men and women bless God for the loving but firm discipline of the old home! It then seemed hard to them, almost cruel, but it bore its precious fruit in the after-life. What they now are and all they are they owe in large measure to the faithful home training. It is not otherwise in God's household. A psalmist writes, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." And he gladly adds, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psalms cxix: 67, 71). Through eternity the saints will rejoice that God loved them too well to let them have their own way. He does not spare the rod, and His rod, like Aaron's, buds and blossoms. So James bids us count our divers temptations as "all joy," their multiplicity may be made to yield "every joy," every sort of glad experience.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

"Temptation" is used in two opposite senses in Scripture. In one it means trial, testing, as we have just seen. In the other it denotes enticement to sin, solicitation to evil. God never tempts in this sense. The basest slander uttered against Him is, to charge Him with being the author of the sin by which one is overcome. Yet men do this. They seek to exculpate

themselves for their evil doing by laying the blame on circumstances, on temperament, on bad companions, on the devil, or on the Creator who, they allege, have made them with these fierce passions and desires. Not thus does a true child of God blaspheme the holy Lord. His language is that of the psalmist, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psalms li: 2-4). His confession is, "my sin," "mine iniquity," "my transgressions." The wrongdoing is one's own, all one's own. God tempts no man to evil; "but each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed." It is a sign of grace, a token of reality, when one honestly confesses his sin, repents of it, and comes to God with humble, trustful confidence. It is a mark of total depravity when one blasphemously charges God with his sin.

II. Prayer for wisdom and guidance, i: 5-7; v: 13-18. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Wisdom is more than knowledge and is better. A man may have extensive and accurate knowledge, and at the same time be anything but wise. The wisdom so often and so highly commended in the Bible is a spiritual perception, a right understanding of what is right and best, and the application of it to the life. Its beginning is the fear of the Lord, and its possession brings contentment and happiness. For wisdom discerns the will of God concerning us, perceives His aim, acquiesces

in His dealings, and draws thence comfort and strength. Wisdom is the best knowledge used for the highest ends. It comes from God, and is to be had for the asking. When serious troubles arise, when exigencies and perplexities beset us, when we know not what to do or how to behave, when no way of escape appears, God is more than equal to the emergency, and may have a hundred ways to lead us out into liberty and to set our feet in a large place. We have only to ask; He gives "liberally," absolutely, disinterestedly. Selfishness gives, but grudges, rebukes; He gives with perfect love, nor reproaches our ignorance nor mocks our fears.

Prayer is not real unless it is in faith. God honors trust in Himself, never doubt or unbelief. Therefore, "let him ask in faith nothing wavering." "Waver" is fine, for while it does not positively deny, it hesitates and trembles between belief and unbelief, as if it met the question, Will God keep His promise?—now with *yes*, and now with *no*. "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord," for he is a "double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." "Double-minded" is most expressive, as if the man had two souls, one trusting the other doubting, one for, the other against, hence inconstant, unsettled like the surge of the sea. Stier well says, "A doubtful petitioner offers not to God a steady hand or heart so that God cannot deposit in it His gift." Twice only do the Gospels speak of Jesus marvelling; once at the faith of a Roman officer (Matt. viii: 10); and once at the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, "And he could do

no mighty work" there, for unbelief ties up the hand of God while faith moves the hand that moves the worlds (Mark vi: 5, 6).

True prayer is offered only by one who is at peace with God and a child in the heavenly household. James writes, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." The prayer of faith is always heard, so is that of the righteous man, for only the justified and saved man prays in absolute trust and confidence.

It is the righteous man who is the genuine intercessor; he can come with holy boldness to the throne of grace in behalf of others. So James directs that one sick call for the elders of the church who are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: "and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him" (v: 14, 15). On this passage mainly rests the "sacrament of extreme unction" held and practiced by the Roman church. The contrast between what Jesus teaches and Rome practices is as sharp as it can well be. In James it is the sick one who calls the elders; in Rome it is others, the sick being supposed to be *in extremis*. Here it is the elders who are called, there it is the priest; here united prayer is offered for recovery; there no prayer for healing is "said;" here the anointing is for healing; there for absolution; here all is done for healing; there for death. Extreme unction is only administered in cases where life is despaired of and death is believed to be certain. It is mildly hinted that the sickness may

be the product of sins committed; and the promise is that if so these shall be forgiven, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up to life and health again. A faithless man, a double-minded man, an unrighteous man, cannot offer true prayer. Prayer without faith is fruitless. James urges sincerity, honesty, genuineness on the part of Christians. He is intolerant of mere profession.

III. Control of the Tongue, i: 26; iii: 1-10. James' indictment against the censorious, malignant, slanderous and lying tongue is one of the most severe, yet the most just, to be found in the whole range of literature. Three very pointed illustrations are introduced to set forth adequately the fact of the smallness of the instrument and the greatness of its work. The tongue is compared to two familiar mechanical appliances, and then to one of the forces of nature, in all three very simple and insignificant means produce mighty results.

(1). The bit and bridle of the horse, iii: 3. "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us." The horse is a powerful animal, useful when domesticated, dangerous and useless when wild, but he must be controlled in any case if he is to serve man with his strength. And he is governed by the bit, the part he *bites*, and the thing which keeps him under command. How trivial the bit seems, yet how effective! So is the human tongue, small in itself, but so powerful as to arouse the wildest passions, defile the noblest mind and pollute the purest heart; or, it can stimulate to high endeavor, instil the loftiest aspirations, and fill the soul with the most steadfast courage

and patience. Curbed, its worth is beyond compare; unfettered, it is one of the deadliest enemies of God and man.

(2). The ship's rudder (iii: 4): "Behold also the ships, which though they are so great and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth." The merchantmen of Paul's time were large vessels, as those described in the Acts clearly indicate (chaps. xxvii, xxviii); but in our day naval architecture builds on a colossal scale. Yet both ancient and modern ships are controlled by a little tongue, or rudder, at the stern. The mammoth ships of the present are guided by a small steering apparatus, but it is powerful enough to counteract the "fierce winds" and the heaviest seas. "So the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." "Death and life are in its power" (Prov. xviii: 21). Speech is like a rudder; it can guide into right ways, escape dangers, battle successfully with storms, and conduct into restful harbors. But it can also wreck and shatter lives, and drown in bottomless floods.

(3). The little fire (iii: 5): "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" "Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!"—R. V.). The power of fire is terrific. A single spark may kindle a conflagration which will consume a whole city. The "Great Fire" of London in 1666 began in a little shop near London Bridge, and by it most of the city was laid in ashes. The fire which in 1871 burned over some 2,100 acres of Chicago, which in a few hours

left 100,000 people homeless, and which destroyed some \$200,000,000 of property, started in a cowshed by the overturning of a lamp. At first a child's foot might have extinguished the tiny spark, but "kindled," it became a raging sea of flame which no fire department could arrest. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity," which "defiles the whole body and sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell." These are fearful emblems of the tongue's malignant and deadly work. But the figure is used sometimes to denote the energy of the Spirit of God, as when the tongues of fire rested on the heads of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Those tongues of flame signified the power of speech, the irresistible words which the disciples should utter. And, indeed, their words were like glowing embers in their intense energy and force, as the record in Acts shows. James' use of the figure denotes the power of the tongue in evil. Speech is often diabolical; it scorches and consumes. The liar scatters firebrands, the slanderer kindles a raging conflagration, the backbiter sets afire the "wheel of nature," the whole circle of his neighborhood.

Furthermore, the unsanctified tongue is untamable (iii: 7, 8). Every form of animal life submits to human authority, and every brute yields to man's patient training. Even the wildest and most ferocious of quadrupeds, as the elephant, the lion, the tiger; the most solitary of birds, as the eagle, the ostrich, the falcon; the most poisonous and implacable of reptiles, as the cobra, the viper, the crocodile, may be tamed, and many of these have been tamed. But man's

tongue is as lawless, as unbridled now as in the days of Cain. Civilization refines and polishes the rough and savage forces, it subdues the brutal passions and curbs the wicked license of the tongue. So some exultantly tell us. As a matter of fact civilization seems only to add to the cruelty of speech by supplying a vocabulary of cultured terms and phrases that are practically inexhaustible. Culture has not drawn a single fang of this wild beast; it has not lessened by a single drop the poison-bag of this viper.

Besides, James notes its glaring inconsistencies (Vers. 9-12). At one time the tongue worships God, at another curses men. Now it sings a glad song of praise, anon it blackens a noble character and blasts a good name. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." They ought not, because contradictory and unnatural. The forces of nature never exhibit such flagrant inconsistencies. A spring never yields salt water and fresh; it obeys the law of its nature, so does a tree. So should the tongue; but alas, it does not. Every Christian needs to pray, "Deliver my soul, O Jehovah, from lying lips and a deceitful tongue" (Psalm cxx: 2).

IV. Denunciation of a barren orthodoxy (ii: 14-26). At first sight there appears to be real antagonism between the teaching of Paul and of James on the important subject of faith and works. Is there no discrepancy between these two men of God as to the doctrine of justification? Apparently there is. Paul writes (Rom. iii: 28), "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

James writes (ii: 24, 26), "Ye see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only;" "faith without works is dead." Paul teaches (Rom. iv) that Abraham was justified by faith; James, by works (ii: 21). But after all the antagonism disappears when we come to understand the aim and the design of each inspired writer. Paul treats exclusively of the ground of our justification, and he affirms that works form no part of it, that legal righteousness is absolutely and forever excluded as the ground and cause of our reconciliation and acceptance with God. James deals with the evidence of the reality and energy of our faith. Paul protests against human merit as being part of our justification before God. James protests against a barren orthodoxy which *says*, but never *does*; which pretends to be true and loyal, but which haughtily refuses to feed the hungry and clothe the naked; which recites weekly or daily even a perfectly sound creed, but which does not work itself out in devotion of life and whole-hearted service. Paul speaks of the cause, James of the effect of that cause. Paul's theme is the tree, James' its fruit. Suppose I say, using another's illustration, a tree cannot be struck by lightning without thunder, I state a fact familiar to all; there can be no destructive lightning unaccompanied by thunder. But I further say, the tree was struck by lightning without thunder, which is also true, for it is the electric bolt that strikes, not the report that accompanies it. So Paul says, "Faith justifies without works, *i. e.*, faith alone justifies us, not works." James says, "But not a faith which is with-

out works." Put it in a single sentence, thus: Faith alone justifies, but not the faith which is alone. Lightning alone strikes, but not the lightning which is alone, without thunder, for that is summer lightning and harmless. James teaches with equal truth as does Paul, that the faith which makes loud profession but which never manifests its energy and life in the activities of good works is dead, being alone, and it is worthless.

FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Simon Peter was a native of Galilee and by occupation a fisherman. He was brought to the Saviour early in His ministry by his brother Andrew (John i: 40, 41). Andrew and his friend John heard the Baptist bear his very remarkable witness to Jesus as he saw Him approaching, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i: 29, 36). Their confidence in their teacher led the two young men to follow Jesus to whom the double testimony was borne, and at His invitation they spent the day with Him. Andrew was won by the interview, and he speedily acquainted his brother Simon with the great discovery, "We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus." Apparently this incident did not issue in a definite call to become a disciple. At a somewhat later period Peter received the call which made him a disciple and which predicted his future ministry for Christ, "a fisher of men" (Matt. iv: 18-20; Mark i: 16-18; Luke v: 10, 11). His call to become an apostle is recorded in Matt. x: 1-4; Mark iii: 13-16).

Peter occupies a distinguished place among the Lord's disciples. In the four lists of the Apostles recorded in the New Testament his name stands first (Matt. x: 2-4; Mark iii: 16-19; Luke vi: 14-16; Acts i: 13). Matthew opens his list with the significant

words, "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first Simon, who is called Peter." It is difficult to determine whether "first" denotes his call or his rank, or whether both ideas may be embraced in it. The fact, however, that his name heads all the lists invests his position with some distinction, if not priority. His position, however, was not so much the result of his appointment by the Saviour as it was that of his personal qualities, his intellectual gifts and endowments. His natural talents were of a high order, and these quickened by the Spirit fitted him to be a leader among men. John had gifts superior even to those of Peter, and they were more rare. But John was not a leader like Peter. Paul in many of his great qualities and talents surpassed both Peter and John. No doubt others of the apostolic band had elements of distinction peculiarly their own. But Peter held a place not shared by others. He, James, and John belonged to the inner circle of the apostleship. The three were present at the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the magnificent scene of the Transfiguration, and at Gethsemane during the awful Agony.

He was a leader in a sense more distinct and prominent than the others. He is the chief figure in the first twelve chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. It is Peter that proposes a successor to the fallen Judas, he that preaches the first Christian sermon on the day of Pentecost and has the indescribable joy of seeing three thousand turned to the Lord by that one discourse; he that opens the door to the Gentile world in the house of the Roman soldier, Cornelius, and that

again has the exquisite delight of witnessing scenes that closely approach those of Pentecost at Jerusalem. Indeed, the supernatural gift of the Spirit to Cornelius and his friends was a second Pentecost. It was given him to pronounce sentence on the guilty pair, Ananias and Sapphira, and to rebuke in the power of the Spirit of God the profane and wicked Simon the sorcerer. In these and the like instances Peter exerted the authority given him by Christ Himself, viz.: to bind and to loose (Matt. xvi: 19)—an authority bestowed by the Head of the new Organization, the Church, upon all the disciples (John xx: 22, 23).

It was to him that Jesus said, "Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my church" (Matt. xvi: 18). This great promise was made Peter in consequence of his memorable confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was the Father who had revealed this mighty truth to him, as the Lord Jesus assures him. He had not discovered it for himself, he never could have done so, nor had it been disclosed to him by any creature whatever. The knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ was a matter of revelation, not of sense perception in any way. "Flesh and blood" did not reveal it to him, nor could. God alone could. In consequence of this deep insight into Jesus' true character, because of the divine revelation made him, and because of his noble confession, Jesus pronounced him blessed and gave him officially the new name which He had said should be his (John i: 42), viz.: *Peter*, the rock-man, the firm witness of the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is common for

the Lord to change the name of favored servants when some supreme crisis comes upon them, as Saul receives the name of Paul when in Cyprus he showed power such as he had never before displayed (Acts xiii: 8-12); Abram becomes Abraham when the Covenant of God is made with him (Gen. xvii: 5); and Jacob becomes Israel, the Prince with God, when the angel wrestled with him (Gen. xxxii: 27, 28). The words, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," most certainly do not mean that by them Peter was made the foundation of the Christian Church, for Christ alone is the foundation, as Peter himself affirms (1 Peter ii: 3-8). The apostle here declares that Christ is the "living Stone," that He is the "chief corner-stone, elect, precious," that believers are built up "a spiritual house," resting as they do on Him who is the Corner-stone. Peter himself is a stone in this heavenly structure, and he is nothing more. Paul likewise asserts that Christ alone is the foundation of the whole Christian building (1 Cor. iii: 11), "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Also in Eph. ii: 20-22 he teaches in exact accord with Peter that Christ is the chief corner-stone, that upon Him are built, first, the apostles and prophets, who are a foundation as resting on Him, and then all the saints rise into a holy temple upon the same foundation and corner-stone. Far less do these words denote that thereby Peter was constituted the head of the Christian Body, that universal supremacy was conferred upon him, and that he transmitted this stupendous

authority to his successors in office, the Bishops of the Roman See. That great colossal structure known as the Roman Hierarchy, with the infallible Pontiff at its head, rests, not on the Apostle Simon Peter, but mainly on the forged documents of the Isidorian Decretals,* and the Donation of Constantine.

In spite of his many noble qualities and traits, and notwithstanding the precious gifts bestowed upon him, Peter nevertheless was too feeble and fallible a man ever to become the rock on which Christ's Church should rest. He was too readily defeated by temptation, too easily swayed by prejudice, too often conquered by fear, to be such a Rock. A few hours after Jesus said, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," the awful words of rebuke fell on his startled ears, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou mindest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. xvi: 22, 23). The opening words of this reprimand are the same Christ used to repel the adversary in the Temptation (Matt. iv: 10). "Offence" is really a stumbling-block over which Satan by poor Peter was seeking to cast down the Son of God! How quickly and how unwittingly the Rock-man becomes a devil! Honored servant of Christ as he was, he was too weak

* "Upon these spurious decretals was built the great fabric of papal supremacy over the different national Churches: a fabric which has stood after its foundation had crumbled beneath it; for no one has pretended to deny, for the last two centuries, that the imposture is too palpable for any but the most ignorant ages to credit." Hallam's *Middle Ages*, p. 274.

a man to be the foundation upon which a soul might rest; he was too often at fault to be even the best pattern for any devout and earnest believer. One alone there is who is worthy of supreme confidence and imitation, Christ, who never was at fault, never made a mistake, who was absolutely without sin. He is our Example.

But let us turn to Peter's Epistles. Two are ascribed to him. Of the first the genuineness is without suspicion. The second has been in doubt for centuries. While the historical attestation of its integrity is less and weaker than that of any other book of the New Testament, yet it is retained in the canon, and is held to be Scripture by multitudes of Christians. But of its trustworthiness more will be said later on in this Study.

Peter addresses the elect sojourners of the Dispersion, *i. e.*, believing Jews who were scattered through various provinces of Asia Minor. These Christian Hebrews are mainly in the mind of the apostle as he writes, but not exclusively so, for he writes to Gentile believers as well, as i: 14; ii: 10; iv: 3, 4 clearly indicates. The Asiatic Provinces Peter mentions appear to have contained multitudes of Jews. Representatives from three of them were present at Pentecost when Peter preached the first Christian sermon. The three Provinces are Pontus, Cappadocia and Asia (Acts ii: 9; 1 Peter i: 1). Some, perhaps most of those, who came to Jerusalem on that memorable occasion from Asia Minor received the Gospel and returned home to spread the good news among their co-religionists. It

is these "elect sojourners of the Dispersion" he addresses, for Peter adhered rather strictly to the Jewish side of his apostolic mission, though he does not shut out the Gentiles from his instructions and his encouragements.

The First Epistle is dated from Babylon (v: 13). What place is meant? Two bearing the name existed in the apostolic age. There was a Babylon in Egypt where a military fortress was found, and where a small population was gathered. The persistent tradition of the Coptic Church dating from remote antiquity alleges that it was from this Babylon Peter wrote the epistle. The tradition further asserts that he with Mark labored in Egypt, that after Peter's death Mark continued the Christian testimony and founded the church of Alexandria. Few besides the Copts of Egypt entertain this view.

The other Babylon is the ancient capital of Chaldea on the Euphrates. Jews in large numbers lived in Babylon, and there is good reason to believe that the Hebrew colony there was not destitute of influence and importance. As the Apostle of the Circumcision it is very probable Peter would visit such a center as Babylon appears to have been in the apostolic age. The words, "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you," may point to a Christian woman and not to a church (see Amer. Rev.), as what follows seems to intimate—"and *so doth* Marcus my son." Both expressions denote an individual, the first probably Peter's wife who accompanied her husband on his missionary tours (cf. 1 Cor. ix: 5). The second was

John Mark, son of Mary (Acts xii: 12). The order in which Peter mentions the Asiatic Provinces (i: 1) favors the view that the Babylon of Chaldea is meant. He begins with the eastern part of Asia Minor, with Pontus, and then passes westward and southward to Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, then northward and westward to Bithynia. It is exactly the order one would mention if placed at Babylon on the Euphrates, and certainly not if he were stationed in the extreme west, say at Rome, or in the extreme south, as Egypt. The weight of evidence appears to incline to the Chaldean Babylon, though ancient tradition as to Peter's being there is silent.

From an early period a mystic interpretation was given the term—Babylon is Rome. Almost all of the Roman Catholic writers so understand it, and some Protestant interpreters as well. But this apocalyptic disguise accords badly, indeed most discordantly, with the plain matter of fact writing which the epistle displays. Such a symbolic meaning of the name is perfectly consistent with the book of Revelation; we expect such veiled, enigmatic use of terms in that book. It is altogether foreign to Peter. The wish to find biblical support for the tradition of Peter's sojourn in Rome may have led to this interpretation; it is the only apparent proof from Scripture that can be adduced; but it has no weight with those who are not ruled by uncertain tradition.

Peter's Epistles bear resemblance to other New Testament writings, particularly to those of Paul, of James, and to the words of our Lord in the Gospels.

But Peter was no copiest. He possessed much independence of thought and originality. His fervid spirit and vigorous thinking impress themselves deeply on his letters. And yet he has characteristics that are worthy of patient and earnest study. Let us point out some of these.

1. A notable feature is the wonderful adaptation to various classes, and to the manifold experiences of life. President Henry G. Weston in a special study of John xxi suggestively notes the connection between the Saviour's threefold charge to Peter (John xxi: 15-17) and Peter's epistles. The charge is thus represented in the Revision: "Feed my lambs; Tend my sheep; Feed my sheep." Two classes are here indicated, babes and the mature. And the two epistles certify how faithfully the apostle obeyed the charge. With loving and tender hand this under-shepherd feeds the lambs, tends the whole flock, feeds the strong, guards from danger, warns against foes, leads into green pastures and beside still waters. How mightily he ministers to those who suffer! He reminds them of the glorious inheritance they are to possess (i: 3-9). He bids them remember the uncomplaining Christ when He was unjustly afflicted by cruel men (ii: 20-25). He tells them of the noble vindication they shall have when the Lord shall take up their cause at His own judgment-seat (iv: 12-18). Much of the First Epistle is designed to comfort the suffering saints, to stimulate them to steadfastness, to encourage them amid their fierce trials, and to assure them of the glorious future that awaited them.

“Honor all men.” “Love the brotherhood.” “Fear God.” “Honor the king.” And this was written when persecution was raging, when that human monster, the world’s colossal criminal, Cæsar Nero, was on the imperial throne, and when Christians were regarded as the foes of humanity. The spirit of the world in the like cases says, Resist, arm for defence and fight for your rights and your lives. The Spirit of Christ says, Arm for martyrdom (iv: 1). “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye” (iii: 14). Keep before you the Master’s example, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (ii: 23). The apostle calls this matchless behavior of the Lord Jesus under unjust treatment a *copy* we are to imitate. His walk and His ways we are to transcribe into our own lives. “He wrote us a pure and perfect copy of obedience, in clear and great letters, in His own blood. He that aims high shoots the higher for it, though he shoot not so high as he aims” (Leighton).

Such is the main teaching of the first epistle. That of the second relates to the perils of false doctrine, false brethren, unscrupulous corruptors of the church and of the Gospel, and deniers of fundamental and vital truth. What must Christians do in the presence of these formidable adversaries? How shall they keep themselves in the love and the holiness of God? From the world they are patiently to suffer. But from these more dangerous enemies how are they to guard themselves? Second Peter answers these and

the like solemn queries. And thus Peter obeys the Lord's injunctions to "feed my lambs; tend my sheep; feed my sheep."

2. Hope. This is the epistle of Hope. How much it makes of this prime grace! Peter seems never to grow weary of defining hope, describing it, and in turning it from side to side to exhibit its manifoldness, its radiant beauty in every circumstance and condition of life. He calls it a "living hope" (i: 3). It is living because to hope is one of the supreme functions of the new nature; the believer is begotten "unto a living hope." No sooner do we receive the Spirit of adoption and cry, Abba, Father, than is hope born, and fills our whole horizon with its radiant splendors. It is a hope that will never put to shame, for it rests on the mighty fact and pledge of Christ's resurrection.

It is a hope that perfectly awaits the grace to be revealed at the advent of our Lord, a hope that will find its full fruition then and not till then (i: 13). It is a hope that is set on God, is in Him, therefore it is sure, imperishable (i: 21). Moreover, it is one that can give a reason for itself, that can assert itself and defend itself victoriously against all gainsayers, because it is living, confident, imperishable, for it is set on God (iii: 15). So, a Christian is one who can sing with the psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the help of my countenance and my God" (Psalms xiii: 11).

With sickly, dying hope and with dead hopes we are quite familiar. The best device a nobleman could

inscribe on his escutcheon was *dum spiro spero* (while I live I hope). Beyond that it seems he could not venture to go. "It is a fearful thing when a man and all his hopes die together" (Leighton). But a Christian can write joyfully and confidently, *dum expiro spero* (while I am dying I hope), for his hope is living, has life in itself, and fills and thrills the future with living reality. This is the hope Peter celebrates, this he urges on his readers, this he prizes above all else in the world.

3. A third characteristic of the epistle is this: Peter's conception of the Christian brotherhood, the Church of God. It is a very exalted one. He sets the new Israel in the loftiest place, he describes it in terms that were applied to the old Israel, but terms which with the Apostle mean more and include more than ancient Israel realized. It must not be forgotten that this conception is by one who was a strict Jew, who, after his call to discipleship and apostleship, still ministered to the circumcision (Gal. ii: 7, 8), and who held somewhat strictly to the laws and customs of Moses to the close of his life. All the more striking and significant on this account his remarkable testimony is:—ii: 9, 10, "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." This is his wondrous description of God's new Israel. What a cluster of

illustrious titles are here! A distinguished man, a general, or a nobleman, a statesman or an admiral, will sometimes have his breast covered with glittering decorations, which mark his rank, his service and his achievements. But such distinctions sink into insignificance alongside of this dazzling cluster. Each one of them belonged to ancient Israel, but they were lost through disobedience and forfeited by unfaithfulness and sin. They pertain now to the spiritual, the new Israel who are kept in God's power unto salvation. This is the heavenly nobility, the royal family, decorated with badges brighter than ever glittered on the breast of king or emperor!

4. A fourth characteristic is this: the epistle does not observe a close logical sequence in its structure, as those of Paul so prominently display. There is truth in Alford's statement, though perhaps he pushes it too far: "The link between one idea and another is found, not in any progress of unfolding thought or argument, but in the last word of the foregoing sentence which is taken up and followed out in the new one." (See i: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, etc.) This peculiarity, however, does not interfere with the unity of the epistle, it rather adds to it, and it gives it a vividness and fulness of exposition which it otherwise would not possess. All the chief doctrines of Christianity are found in it. The vicarious suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ (ii: 24); the new birth (i: 23); redemption by the blood of Christ (i: 18, 19); faith, hope, patient endurance under suffering and holiness of life are all taught and enforced with great earnest-

ness and force by the apostle. It is noteworthy that amid the trials coming on Christians at the time the main ground of encouragement and exhortation is the speedy coming of the Lord and the blessedness and glory they shall then uninterruptedly enjoy. But this is characteristic of the Bible. The Spirit uniformly keeps before the minds of the suffering saints in every book of Scripture the Blessed Hope of the Lord's return to the world and the glorious deliverance and exaltation of all who wait for Him. This is made their comfort and their strength in the day of their trouble and distress. May it be personally and consciously ours.

ANALYSIS.

(General.)

- I. Christian Privilege, chaps. i-ii: 10.
- II. Christian Duties, chaps. ii: 11-v.

(Particular.)

- 1. Salutation, i: 1, 2.
- 2. Blessedness of salvation, I: 3-12.
- 3. Exhortation, i: 13-16.
- 4. Redemption, i: 17-25.
- 5. Exhortation, ii: 1-3.
- 6. Calling and Standing of believers, ii: 4-10.
- 7. Exhortation, ii: 11-20.
- 8. Christ's Example—character and work ii: 21-25.
- 9. Various Exhortations, iii-v.
 - a. Behavior toward one another, iii: 1-12.
 - b. Fidelity under Trial, iii: 13-22.
 - c. Behavior under persecution, iv: 1-19.
 - d. Duties of Elders, v. 1-4.
 - e. Humility and Vigilance, v: 5-10.
 - f. Conclusion, v: 11-14.

The epistle is rich in the glorious doctrines that it unfolds, and powerful in its appeals to Christians. The inspired writer knows what these suffering saints need and all they need, and he speaks to their very heart. He views them as pilgrims and strangers walking across the earth toward their true home, their heavenly country. He urges them to do no harm to any, to do what good they can to all, to bear patiently the cruel wrongs they unjustly suffer, to copy their Lord who "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," to remember the noble name they bear, and the glory of the heritage which soon shall be theirs.

Some prominent things in First Peter may engage our attention briefly.

1. The Christian's glorious inheritance (i: 3-5). In this majestic sentence two things are made pre-eminent; first, the nature of the inheritance; second, the certainty of its attainment. The inheritance is described by four significant epithets (ver. 4). It is declared to be "incorruptible." This word points to its substance. It is imperishable. In it there is no element of decay. It holds in its heart no germ of death. Like its great Author, the living God, it is unchangeable and eternal in its being. Of no heritage of earth can this magnificent term "incorruptible" be used. Imperfection and corruption attach to all earthly possessions. Sooner or later they pass from their owners or the owners pass from them. But this is subject to no loss nor change nor surprise. In every way it is inviolable. Violence is not heard in that land, wasting nor destruction in her borders (Isa. lx: 18).

The inheritance is described as "undefiled." It is not stained by sin nor defiled by any crime, either in its acquisition or its possession. Human heritages are all marred by human wrongs. There is hardly an acre of soil on earth that is not polluted by iniquity; there is not an estate the world over that is not stained by fraud or violence. The very coin that passes from hand to hand is in most cases soiled by guilt. But this of Peter is free from every taint of evil. Into the heavenly inheritance shall in no wise enter whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie (Rev. xxi: 27).

It is one that "fadeth not away." That is, is unwithering. Ages on ages do not impair its beauty nor dim its lustre. Its bloom will remain fresh, its fragrance unimpaired, forever. The bliss of the saved will never diminish, the pleasures at God's right hand never cloy. After millions of years in heaven the saved will know no weariness nor satiety, for their inheritance is unfading and unfailing. Peter describes it also as a "crown of life that fadeth not away" (v: 4). "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalms xvi: 11). "So that our inheritance is glorious in these three respects: it is in *substance*, incorruptible: in *purity*, undefiled: in *beauty*, unfading" (Alford).

"Reserved in heaven." This is the last and the crowning feature. The saints' inheritance is heavenly, and it is reserved in heaven. This marks its worth and excellence, and likewise its security. It is surpassingly rich and lovely because it is heavenly. Jesus Christ is the central object of it, and His riches are unsearch-

able; His glory infinite and eternal; His love all-sufficient and satisfying. The heritage is kept therefore safe from all foes, from all changes, from all waste. It is free from all possibility of invasion from enemies and from decay in itself.

What guarantees have believers that they shall come into the enjoyment of this great heritage? The best possible. Many an inheritance is jeopardized and lost to the heirs through defective title or dishonest guardians. We know that our inheritance is secure, for it is in the keeping of the faithful Creator. But we live in a world that is hostile to us and to our King; we carry within ourselves a traitor heart. What certainty is there that we shall actually "possess our possessions? (1.) God's power is our pledge in this behalf. We are kept by it. The term for *kept* is a military one, meaning guarded, protected as in a fortress or citidal. How secure must they be who have God's power for their guard? We can triumphantly exclaim with the prophet, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (Isa. xxvi: 1). "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe" (Prov. xviii: 10). The heritage is reserved in heaven for the saints: the sainted are guarded for it by the power of God.

(2.) "Through faith." This is the second element in the security of the saints. It is God's power that preserves them unto salvation; it is their faith that lays hold on the power and makes it effective in them to the final accomplishment of His grace in their be-

half. God's power is the efficient cause, faith the effective means. The two, power and faith, join hands for the believer's eternal safety. Let the force of the two prepositions *in* and *through*, in this place, be well marked: we are guarded *in* the power of God *through* faith. Faith brings us within the circle of the divine power, and the power keeps us within the circle of the saved. The efficient cause becomes inherent in the effective means. "For by grace have ye been saved through faith: and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii: 8, R. V.).

(3.) The Living Hope is still another pledge of our security. The order of the words as Peter wrote them is this—"Begotten us again unto a hope living through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." His resurrection is the very life of our hope. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv: 17). A darkness more terrible than that of the grave enshrouds eternity, if He is not risen. It is remarkable that hope, as a Christian grace and fruit of the Spirit, is not found in any of the four Gospels. It comes into prominence, it flowers out with magnificent exuberance, only after Christ's resurrection. It then becomes a living and mighty force in the believer's spirit; it then serves to strengthen his faith, keep him firm and steady amid trouble and gloom, and to fill his present with light and joy, his future with indescribable glory.

In this great passage we have four things:
(1) God's mercy, the primary cause in our salvation;
(2) Christ's death and resurrection, the procuring

cause; (3) regeneration, the formal cause; (4) bliss, the final cause.

II. The prophets and their study, i: 10, 11:—“Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that *should come* unto you: searching what *time* or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them” (R. V.).

(1) The testimony of the prophets. With Peter and his fellow apostles their testimony is authoritative and final. In his sermon at Pentecost he confirmed his inspired teaching by an appeal to two of the prophets, Joel and David. On a subsequent occasion (Acts iii: 24) he cited Moses to ratify what he was saying, and added that “all the prophets from Samuel and those that followed after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.” He was at no loss to discover the Messiah in the words of the prophets. He saw in them unmistakable predictions of His advent, His sufferings, and His glories.

(2) The burden of the prophetic communications was salvation. The prophets spoke on many subjects; they had to exhort, rebuke, and entreat their wayward contemporaries; to denounce sin, to announce judgment upon their own people Israel and upon the Gentile nations as well. But ever and anon their vision would be filled with the future and its blessedness, their voices would swell into rapture as they saw and foretold the great salvation to be brought to the world

and the grace that would then so copiously go out to men; for Messiah was to suffer the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God, that in His suffering, His triumph and His finished work, redemption full and free should be secured to all who trust in Him. In its most comprehensive sense salvation was the prophets' theme.

(3) The prophets' messages were in reality the message of the Spirit of Christ. It was He who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. The prophets always disclaim any part in the origination of their messages. They affirm in the most positive and solemn manner that their predictions are not their own, but God's, that even their words have been given them. Hence they are called God's "spokesmen" and God's "mouth" (Exodus iv: 15, 16; vii: 1, 2). Peter himself writes of the source and the authority of prophecy this majestic sentence: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter i: 21).

(4) The Prophets' Study. They "inquired and searched diligently." The terms are strong and emphatic. They pored over the predictions which the Spirit had revealed through themselves; they scrutinized these and bent their minds to the study of them with the most eager, prolonged and earnest purpose. Two points, it seems, engaged their attention more particularly, viz.: "What and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point to." The first "what" relates to the date when Messiah

would likely appear; the second "what" to the events and circumstances which would attend His advent. It was a fruitful theme for investigation, one that not only enlisted the whole strength of their minds, but that engaged also the inquiry of nobler students, viz.: the angels, ver. 12—"Which things angels desire to look into."

It is obvious from this language that the prophets did not always understand their own communications; they wrote down the messages they received from the Spirit, and afterwards they gave themselves to a diligent search into the contents of them. Daniel furnishes an example of such research. He studied deeply the prophecies of Jeremiah, and from them learned when the Babylonian exile should terminate (Dan. ix: 2). Accordingly, he gave himself to importunate prayer that Jehovah would forgive His people's transgressions and restore them to their land, even as He had promised. Moreover, it is quite clear from the words of Daniel that he did not uniformly understand the significance of the divine communications which he received, and that he sought earnestly to do so. In vii: 28, he says, "As for me, Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart." "And I wondered at the vision, but none understood it" (viii: 27). He tells us that one heavenly messenger said to another, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (viii: 16). After some of the mighty visions he remained without strength for some time, he even fainted, and was "sick certain days" (viii: 27). Now,

no more cogent argument for the verbal inspiration of the prophetic Scriptures could possibly be adduced than this fact. For it is beyond question that if the prophets did not grasp the meaning of their own messages, if after receiving them they searched them to know what they meant, then the words must have been given them, else they never could have accurately recorded what they saw and heard. It is utter folly, in the presence of this telling fact, to talk of the "thoughts," or the "concepts," alone being given them, and then they clothed these in such language as they could command. If this was the method by which God spoke through the prophets (Heb. i: 1), then we can have no certainty that the communications are unerringly true. Mistakes would inevitably occur in the recording of the messages. The prophets could no more have faithfully written the messages than could a child report a closely reasoned address by a competent man on an abstruse subject, of which the child knew nothing. The very words were also given the prophets. Besides, here is evidence of both revelation and inspiration. God revealed to the prophets the things concerning Christ which still lay in the distant future; He inspired them to write the predictions exactly as they had been revealed. The unaided prophet could no more have foretold the future nor truthfully described things to come than he could create a world.

III. Preaching to the spirits in prison.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the

Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water" (1 Peter iii: 18-20).

"Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (R. V.).

Some passages of Scripture are, as is well known, obscure and difficult. A few baffle elucidation. Gal. iii: 20 is one such text:—"Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one; but God is one." Winer says there are 250 explanations of this verse; Evans, between two and three hundred. The huge number serves to show how puzzling it is. "Baptism for the dead," 1 Cor. xv: 29 is another, and women to be veiled because of the angels (1 Cor. xi: 10) is a third. This of First Peter, as also the kindred text in iv: 6, belongs to this class. The interpretations and applications of it are multitudinous, perplexing and contradictory to the last degree. Some of these are ludicrous, and some are almost shocking in their temerity. Many interpreters, perhaps a majority of them, evangelical, sacramentarian and rationalistic, insist that our Lord in the in-

terval between His death and His resurrection in His human spirit actually visited the abode of imprisoned spirits in Hades and proclaimed to them in some fashion the Gospel of salvation. Some samples of this view are here appended. "If language has any meaning, this language means that Christ, when His spirit descended into the lower world, proclaimed the message of salvation to the once impenitent dead." "If the fate of those dead sinners was not irrevocably fixed by death, then it must be clear and obvious to the very meanest understanding that neither, of necessity, is ours" (Farrar). "The proof texts (1 Peter iii: 18-21; iv: 6) admit of no other interpretation than that the historic Christ Himself, made alive after His death for a higher spiritual existence, proclaimed the Gospel to the unhappy contemporaries of Noah, who perished in the flood" (Van Osterzee). "In 1 Peter iii: 19 St. Peter teaches that God's way of salvation does not end with life" (Lange). "To all who are dead at the time of the last judgment, the Gospel has been preached, be it before or after their death" (Huther in Meyer). "We cannot see in the words anything but an attestation of the truth which the Church Catholic has received in the Apostles' Creed, that Christ died and was buried and descended into Hell" (Plumtre). "I understand these words to say that our Lord, in His disembodied state, did go to the place of detention of departed spirits, and did there announce His work of redemption, preach salvation, in fact, to the disembodied spirits of those who refused to obey the voice of God when the judgment of the

flood was hanging over them" (Alford). There is no mistaking the view of the passage held by these distinguished writers. The list of names on the same side might be greatly lengthened. But weighty as their authority is as interpreters of the word of God, we cannot accept the view. The objections to it are, we think, conclusive.

This is one of the very few texts commonly cited in support of the statement in the so-called Apostles' Creed of "our Lord's descent into Hell." Gloag is authority for the remark that "this article was added to the creed at a late period, about the beginning of the fifth century," which seems to prove that such a belief was no part of the church's primitive confession, but a notion received long after the decline of evangelical truth had set in. On it likewise is made to rest the unscriptural doctrine of the deliverance of Old Testament believers from Hades and their translation to heavenly bliss by the Saviour's power. Upon it also is founded the theory of a "second probation," that is, that there will be the offer of salvation to the impenitent after their death and before or at the time of the Final Judgment.

The aim of this study is to discover if possible the true meaning of this very obscure and difficult passage, and not to attempt an exhaustive examination of it. Two words seem to demand a brief definition. The term "preached" in connection with Christ and the Apostles denotes always the preaching of the gospel, the offer of salvation to those who are destitute of it. Rarely does it signify to publish or to proclaim, in

the general and indefinite sense; only some five times is the word thus translated in the sixty times it occurs in the New Testament. Here it must certainly be understood as meaning the preaching of the gospel, the offer of salvation to sinners.

“Spirits” are beyond peradventure disembodied human spirits; they are not fallen angels nor demons, as some have strangely conjectured.

Two grave questions at once confront him who seeks to understand Peter’s language: 1. Who are the spirits in prison? 2. When did Christ preach to them? But these questions are not here discussed separately, but together. In fact, they are so intimately connected that the treatment of the one involves also that of the other. The real inquiry may be thus expressed: When and to whom did Christ preach? The answers to this inquiry by the commentators are various, conflicting, and in some cases unsatisfactory and misleading. The mere mention of some will suffice to secure their rejection. It has been conjectured that Christ’s preaching was directed against the devil and his angels. The right understanding of the phrase “spirits in prison” rules out this conjecture. Or, it was a proclamation of judgment and condemnation to the lost in perdition, which seems to be forbidden by the true meaning of “preached,” or, an offer of salvation to all the unholy dead, which is negated by Peter’s statement that these “spirits in prison” were men who in the days of Noah were disobedient. The Apostle expressly says the preaching was limited to the antediluvians. Or, it was a proclamation to those

of Noah's time who repented after the rain began and the flood was set in, but too late for them to escape death. There is not the slightest hint that any of the scoffers did repent even after the rising deluge deprived them of all hope of deliverance. Peter elsewhere declares that God did not spare them, that He overwhelmed *the world of the ungodly* (2 Peter ii: 5). Scripture furnishes no evidence whatever that any of the apostate antediluvians who were drowned repented and were saved at the last moment. The whole description of them leads to the belief that Noah and his household alone of that entire generation were children of God and saved.

Some other interpretations of the passage deserve more extended notice, and to these we now turn.

(1) The preaching was addressed to the spirits of the Old Testament saints who, till the death of Christ, were held in some sort of detention in the unseen world. This was the general opinion of the Early Fathers; it is that of some modern interpreters likewise. Eph. iv: 8 is cited as proof: "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (cf. Psalm lxxviii: 18). The captives whom the triumphant Lord led were not imprisoned saints, but enemies of Him and of His people. Colossians ii: 15 explains who these were: "Having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." If "the spirits" mentioned were Old Testament saints they could not be prisoners. They had believed and obeyed God. But Peter declares these spirits afore-

time were disobedient, and that they lived on earth in Noah's day. They had scornfully rejected the divine testimony, were rebellious and apostate, and went to prison in consequence. They were not saints at all, but foes of God.

Moreover, the term *prison*, which occurs some forty times in the New Testament as denoting a place of forcible detention, is in every instance employed in a bad sense, *i. e.*, as denoting a place of punishment, as the place in which those are confined who are charged with felony or crime. God does not lock up as criminals the spirits of His own people who trust and obey Him when they pass out of this life into that beyond. We conclude, therefore, that "the spirits in prison" were not and could not be saints of former dispensations.

(2) The passage holds out no hope for a "second probation," that is, that after death there may be opportunity to be saved. There is not a hint in it that any of "the spirits" preached to were set free from prison, even allowing that the proclamation was made to them by the Lord in the interval between His death and resurrection. Some interpreters are sure that "the spirits" were still in prison when Peter wrote. It has even been proposed to insert the word *now* in the text and to read thus: "Unto the spirits *now* in prison." If this opinion be accepted, and there is much to commend it, then thirty years and more after Christ's death and resurrection these unhappy disbelievers were still confined in prison waiting the awful judgment which would pronounce their final

doom. They did not repent at the preaching of the Lord Jesus, even supposing that He did preach to them after His own death; they remained and still remain disobedient, incorrigible. This tremendous fact closes every door of hope for those who live and die in sin and impenitence. For, if the sinners of Noah's day rejected God's mercy and went into prison in Hades in consequence, and if after all the centuries ensuing down to the time of Christ's death and His alleged preaching to them in the prison did not lead to repentance and the release of so much as one of them, what possible ground of hope can there be for any others?

Besides, Scripture represents men's state, whether saved or lost, as irreversible after their death. If the narrative of the Rich Man and Lazarus of Luke xvi teaches anything it teaches this. There are the two states clearly defined—Abraham's bosom and torment. Between the two the "great gulf" lies which for both sides is forever impassable. The destiny of both Lazarus and Dives is unalterably fixed. From our passage a second offer of salvation to the lost in Hades cannot be legitimately inferred.

But 1 Peter iv: 6 is urged as evidence on the other side, for it is believed by some that Peter here teaches the Gospel was preached to those already dead and it was received by them: "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (R. V.). What dead? Not to the spiritually dead who were still in the flesh

when the Apostle write, for ver. 5 forbids this interpretation; nor yet to those who dwell in the unseen world, disembodied spirits, but those who heard and believed the Gospel when they were living but were dead when Peter wrote—these are to be judged at last in the same way as those living now. Peter evidently has in mind Christians who had suffered for the Name, perhaps had been even put to death because of their faith, judged by men as wicked, but who will be fully vindicated at Christ's bar. We return now to the main theme of the passage.

(3) Did Christ personally proclaim the Gospel to the "spirits in prison" in the interval between His death and resurrection? Unhesitatingly we reply *no*. The phrase, "put to death in the flesh," is co-ordinate with the parallel phrase, "quickenened by the spirit," "made alive in the spirit" (Ver. 18, R. V.). "Flesh" and "spirit" are antithetical, are in sharp contrast with each other. It is insisted by those who advocate the affirmative of the question above that "flesh" signifies Christ's body, and that "spirit" must mean His human spirit. The preposition *in* must be inserted before each term—"in flesh," "in spirit." It is hence inferred that the Lord in His human spirit which was made alive to a higher and more active state of existence after His death personally went and preached to the spirits in prison in Hades; therefore the preaching was in the interval between His death and His resurrection. Such is the argument urged in support of the theory that the Lord preached to the dead.

We cannot accept this exegesis; we do not believe

that on just principles of interpretation the passage teaches this. To begin with, the phrase "put to death in the flesh," is uncommon; it is a departure from the ordinary way of speaking of death. As Barnes says, "How singular it would be to say of Isaiah or of Paul or of Peter that they were put to death in the flesh!" The phrase seems to indicate that there was something extraordinary in His death, that it was His humanity that died, but that there was in Him a nature that did not die, nor could—His divine nature, His eternal Spirit as the Son of God. We must not limit the contrast to "flesh" and "spirit;" both clauses must be embraced in it, "put to death in the flesh," and "made alive in the Spirit." The Lord's human soul was sundered from His body by death just as these are sundered in all men when death overtakes them. But He did not remain under the power of death; it was "not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts ii: 24). Accordingly, Peter adds, "but was quickened in (by) the spirit" (Spirit).

The word *quickened* occurs in ten other places besides this, and there is no mistaking its meaning. In seven, viz.: John v: 21 (twice); Rom. iv: 17; viii: 11; I Cor. xv: 22, 36, 45, it refers to the resurrection of the dead. In three, viz.: John vi: 63; 2 Cor. iii: 6; Gal. iii: 21, it denotes the giving of spiritual life. In each case it signifies *to give life* where before it had ceased to be, or where it had never been. The same word is found in two other places, but with an affix, Eph. ii: 5; Col. ii: 13. But in these as everywhere else it denotes the impartation of life where it was not

found before. Graham (in Ephesians ii: 5) expresses its precise meaning: "This quickening is the spiritual resurrection of the soul from a state of sin and death as the prelude and pledge of the literal resurrection at the coming of Christ." Prof. Cremer defines it as the action by which the dead are raised to life whether as to the body or the soul, and he cites 1 Peter iii: 18 as proof.

Those who hold that it was Christ's human soul that was quickened must impose upon the word quickened a meaning which the New Testament forbids. So we are told that it means a more active life, a fuller life, an increase of life, a life fitting Him to preach to Hades sinners! But everywhere else it means giving life, bringing to life. This could not be said of His human spirit, for assuredly it did not die. What then was it which was made alive? Exactly that which had been put to death, His "flesh," His humanity. Quickened signifies resurrection. The very body which lay in Joseph's tomb was on the morning of the third day made alive by the mighty power of God. This interpretation balances exactly the antithetical clause, "put to death in the flesh." What had been put to death is made alive in resurrection.

Is it quite certain that "spirit" means Christ's human spirit? The Revisions, both English and American, print it with a small s instead of the capital S of King James, thus taking it to denote His human spirit. But if this be so, "quickened" must be given a meaning it does not bear wherever else it occurs. "Spirit" stands in sharp contrast with "flesh;" it is that which

did not die. Obviously, if it be taken as denoting the Agent by whom He was quickened, then it certainly denotes Christ's divine nature, His Godhead. Romans i: 3, 4 presents a similar contrast between His natures, human and divine. He was of the seed of David according to the flesh, He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. Here also there is a sharp contrast, the seed of David stands in contrast with the Son of God. Of course, His human spirit was holy, but it was an essential part of His humanity, and hence the expression, "Spirit of holiness" cannot mean His human spirit. It must be His divine nature that is meant. According to that nature He was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. So in 1 Peter iii: 18 His being quickened into resurrection life is by the same divine nature, the Spirit of the living God. By His own infinite power, His Deity, He is raised from the dead (John ii: 19).

It was in this Spirit, or by this Spirit, He went and preached to the spirits in prison. It is contended that "went" implies a personal going by Him to the realm of the dead. Not necessarily. In Eph. ii: 17 we read, "And (Christ) came and preached peace to you which were afar off." The preaching was in this instance by the Lord Jesus Himself, and yet it was not done by Him in person, but by His Spirit in His servants, Paul and companions.

We understand, therefore, the preaching to the spirits in prison to have been done by the Spirit of

Christ through Noah, "the preacher of righteousness," as Peter calls him elsewhere (2 Peter ii: 5), to the antediluvians. But they refused the message, they gave no heed to the solemn warning, they hardened their hearts by their disobedience, and hence became prisoners in Hades. Gen. vi: 3 reads, "And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." That is to say, His Spirit should strive, in the testimony of Noah, during a hundred and twenty years and no longer. Now it would be an extraordinary thing that with those persons only (for Peter speaks only of them) the Lord should strive in testimony after their death. Is that at all likely? Is there so much as a hint in all the rest of Scripture that He offers salvation after their death to those who in their lifetime heard the message and rejected it? There is absolutely none.

It is not a description of all that died in unbelief, but of a generation favored with a special testimony and threatened with a particular stroke of judgment. They were those who despised the testimony of Christ through Noah. Just as His Spirit prophesied in the prophets, so the Spirit of Christ preached by Noah. Nor was the preaching to spirits when they were in prison, but to the disobedient before they became prisoners in Hades. Multitudes of the ungodly perished before the Flood; for ages after it greater multitudes died in their sins. Many of these, perhaps the majority of them, never had an offer of salvation made to them. Why should these countless multitudes be

ignored by the Saviour, and those alone of Noah's day have a second offer of mercy? For one hundred and twenty years they had the testimony of Noah by the Spirit of Christ warning, rebuking and entreating them, but all in vain. They kept right on in their rebellion and apostasy till the tremendous judgment so long impending broke down upon them in all its desolating fury. Now, should these imprisoned spirits have a second offer of pardon and of life in the unseen world, while all others there, who never had a chance at all, be passed by in merciless neglect and pitiless silence? Would such partiality be fair or equitable? Does God who is righteous and holy thus do?

On the contrary, there is proof that those who in this life refuse His message in unbelief are at length abandoned and left to their fate even in the present world. When the shadow of the Cross was already falling on the Lord's pathway, and when it was determined by the rulers and the people that He must die, Jesus uttered His lament over the guilty city—a mournful dirge it is and a sentence of woe indescribable—"If thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke xix: 41-44); "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii: 37-39). Ere long the awful verdict was executed; the city was destroyed, the temple burned, and Israel went into an exile which endures to this day, and will till the Lord shall come again. When scornful rejection of mercy is complete, when disobedience has culminated in rebellion and apostasy, and the sentence of doom has

been pronounced, judgment, appalling and overwhelming, falls and probation ends. If this takes place even in this life, how much more certainly does it in the world beyond where destiny is forever fixed?

Did Christ's human spirit at His death go into Hades, into the region of the lost? Did He "descend into hell?" Believed by many, doubted by some, denied by others. Christ's seventh and last saying on the Cross was His calm and trustful prayer, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii: 46). Was not that prayer heard and answered? Who would be so bold as to deny that it was? If, then, His human spirit at His death went to the Father, it did not go to the realm of the spirits in prison. The Father most certainly was not in that region. Moreover, to the penitent thief at His side he promised, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Where was Paradise? In 2 Cor. xii: 2-4 Paul identifies Paradise with the "third heaven," with the highest heaven, with God's own habitation. The promise to the overcomer in Ephesus (Rev. ii: 7) is, "to him will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (cf. Rev. xxii: 1, 2). Prof. Swete is exactly right, Paradise is the "final joy of the saints in the presence of God and of Christ" (Com. *in loc.*). Taking His prayer and promise together the inference is indisputable that Jesus Christ in the most solemn hour of all time, in the awful hour of His death on the cross, confidently and assuredly expected to go into the Father's presence, into Paradise, God's heavenly abode. Is anyone so presump-

tuous as to affirm that He was disappointed? If heaven was the place of His sojourn in the interval between His death and resurrection, then it is manifest He did not go to the place in Hades where wicked spirits are confined. Therefore He did not at that time preach to the spirits in prison, for He was not there.

It may be asked, however, did He not go to Hades according to Psalm xvi: 10, and Peter's exposition of it in Acts ii: 25-32? Yes, but not necessarily to the abode of the lost. Sheol and Hades alike designate the unseen world, the world of departed spirits, not necessarily a place of torment and of misery unless expressly mentioned. Hades denotes the intermediate state, the abode of the disembodied human spirit till the resurrection at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself went thither at His death, and both the Psalm and Peter's explanation announce the glorious truth that our Lord's spirit should not tarry in the unseen world, nor should His body see corruption in the grave, for His resurrection should speedily follow His death and burial.

For us the passage in First Peter iii: 18-20, with all its difficulties of interpretation, teaches the following truths:

1. Jesus Christ was put to death as a substitute for sinners, the just for the unjust, that they might be brought unto God.

2. He was made alive again by the resurrection from the dead, and He now lives in the power of an endless life.

3. His resurrection was effected by the almighty power of God.

4. By the same power, His own eternal Spirit, He went by His servant Noah to the Antediluvians and proclaimed to them His truth—truth that invited, warned and threatened them with overwhelming judgment.

5. Noah's contemporaries refused the message, rejected the messenger and persisted in their disobedience and unbelief.

6. The flood "destroyed them all," and their spirits are now confined in the prison of the lost where they await the final judgment (2 Peter ii: 9; Jude 6).

7. The passage holds out no hope for the impenitent, it forbids the notion that those who during the earthly life refuse the Gospel of God's grace may have a second chance in the world beyond, and may be ultimately saved.

No preaching to the dead is its lesson.

SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

The Second Epistle of Peter comes to us with less historical support of its genuineness than any other book of the New Testament. Origen (c. A. D. 230) is the first writer who mentions it by name, but he is careful to say that its authority was questioned. Eusebius and Jerome state the same general fact, though Jerome included it in his Vulgate Version, while Eusebius speaks of First Peter as generally accepted, but of the second as quite doubtful. It seems certain that it was not formally admitted into the Canon of Scripture until near the close of the fourth century by the Councils of Laodicea (A. D. 372) and Carthage (A. D. 397). The historical attestation to its canonicity is thus seen to be meagre indeed. Accordingly, many are even now in doubt as to its integrity.

It must be added that there was a strong tendency in sub-apostolic times to use Peter's name to give credit to apocryphal writings. There are such writings extant, as *e. g.*, *The Gospel of Peter*, *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Acts of Peter*, etc. These and the like spurious books belong to the second century of our era, or even later, and hence are of no authority touching the matters of which they treat. They exhibit, however, the tendency of the age in which they were produced, and the possibility that Second Peter might likewise

be spurious. But would they have come into existence had Peter never written anything? The fact of abundant forgery is at once an evidence that some genuine writings of the Apostle existed and were received generally as his.

The internal evidence in the support of the genuineness of Second Peter is clear and strong. It opens with the positive statement of Peter's authorship—"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ"—The insertion of Simon, the old Hebrew name, in the forefront of the document is significant. If a forger had been writing in Peter's name at the opening of his false letter he almost certainly would have followed the First Epistle and simply written, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Note also that "servant" is introduced in the Second Epistle, but is absent from the First. He calls himself a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. "Although several pseudonymous writings appear in early Christian literature, there is no Christian document of *value* written by a forger who uses the name of an Apostle" (Dods). If this important statement is accepted at its full worth, it goes far to settle the question of authorship, for the writer inserts the name Apostle at the opening of his epistle—"an Apostle of Jesus Christ."

Moreover, the writer is distinctively a Christian; he addresses those who "have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God" (i: 1). His is the same precious faith which all the saints enjoy; his also the exceeding great and precious promises of God, and he expects with all other believers to

be made a partaker of the divine nature (i: 3, 4). Is it at all probable or likely that one with such a faith and such expectations would deliberately falsify the name of Simon Peter and turn liar? The writer is unsparing in his denunciations of false teachers, corruptors of others, rebels against God, hypocrites and apostates (ii). He instances the fall of the angels, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the rebuke of Balaam, as examples of the doom of those who know the truth and yet live in shameful sin and crime. Would a Christian and servant of Jesus Christ be at all likely to commit in the most flagrant manner the things he so vehemently condemns? If the writer was not the Apostle Peter, he was a false teacher, a corruptor of others, and a hypocrite, which to us seems incredible.

He associates himself with the other Apostles, is in full sympathy with Paul, is acquainted with Paul's epistles, and he holds and teaches the same fundamental truth. An apostolic spirit breathes through this document such as is not found in a spurious writing, and such as a forger never exhibits. He is anxiously concerned for the purity of the faith, and for the steadfastness and holiness of the saints. He exhorts them to give "diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight," and that they "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." All this and very much more of like devout teaching is apostolic in tone and betokens genuineness and reality.

Furthermore, the writer appeals to certain facts in

the life of Peter which make his epistle almost autobiographical. For example, he speaks of "putting off of my tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me" (i: 13, 14). The reference undoubtedly is to John xiii: 36; xxi: 18, 19. In the latter passage Jesus distinctly announced to Peter that his death was to be one of violence, even crucifixion, and that it would occur when the Apostle was an old man. He claims to have been a witness of the Transfiguration (i: 16-18). We know from the record of the Gospels that Peter was one of the three who were present when the Lord's person glówed with an unearthly brightness. He indirectly claims the inspiration without which true prophecy is impossible (i: 19-21). He asserts that this is his "second epistle" (iii: 1). This testimony on the part of the writer is personal, emphatic and direct. It reads exactly like Peter's manner of speaking of himself at the Council of Jerusalem, "Ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe."

Jude appears to quote from Second Peter. The question as to the priority of these two epistles, viz.: Second Peter and Jude, is by no means settled. Writers are pretty evenly divided. Chase, Peake and Plumtre hold that Jude is the older, while Zahn, Lumby, and apparently Dods regard Second Peter as the older. In favor of the latter view, which the present writer accepts, it may be argued: 1. That Jude, who seems to quote from the Book of Enoch and to refer indirectly at least to the apocryphal Assumption of

Moses, would more probably quote from Peter than Peter from Jude. Indeed there is no evidence that Peter cites from any writer. 2. Peter's description of the false teachers and corruptors of truth points mainly to the future. His prominent verbs are in the future tense, *e. g.*, ii: 1, 2, 3, 12, etc. Certainly he uses the present tense in his description of the evil character and conduct of these hypocrites and apostates, but their presence among the saints he puts in the future. The deadly germs were already there, the rank growth would speedily follow. Jude, on the contrary, throughout his epistle speaks of them as already come; his objects are present, they are in the midst of the children of God, these "filthy dreamers," these "murmurers." It seems to us certain that while Paul in his address to the Ephesian Elders (Acts xx: 28-30), and in his epistle to Timothy (2 Tim. iii: 1-9), and Peter in his second letter, alike predict the coming of the antinomians and the heretics, Jude describes them as actually here, prosecuting their wicked work with shameless effrontery. He writes, "But, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they said unto you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts" (vers. 17, 18). One of the Apostles here mentioned seems certainly to have been Peter, Paul perhaps was another. Peter writes as follows: "That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles: knowing this first, that in the

last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter iii: 2-4). The close resemblance of these passages to each other extends to the words and phrases. Both urge their readers to "remember," both date the fulfilment of the prediction at the "last time," both use the term "mockers," and both say that the prediction came through "the apostles." But, note, that Peter affirms that the fulfilment was still future when he wrote, but Jude declares that it is already fulfilled in his day, for he goes on to say, "These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit" (v. 19). It appears to us that beyond question Jude quotes from both Peter and Paul, and that he has specially in mind the words of Peter. Therefore Second Peter is older than Jude, and hence beyond doubt canonical, if Jude is.

The keyword of First Peter is *Hope*; of Second Peter *Knowledge*.

1. It has often been observed that the Apostle uses the term knowledge with much frequency, and in such connections and with such fulness of significance as to disclose the great importance he attaches to it (i: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8; ii: 20, 21; iii: 18). The word he uses is generally in the intensified form, viz.: *full knowledge*. Christians should know the truth and the whole truth; they should be able to detect error, and recognize the times in which they live; they should know the dangerous world that surrounds them and that ever seeks to poison their minds, debase their affections, neutralize their testimony, and paralyze their faith. Hence

Peter's final appeal is, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (iii: 18).

2. The basis of true knowledge (i: 1-4). It springs from a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the "exceeding great and precious promises" which Divine Power has given us. This knowledge leads us into acquaintance with the righteousness of God, with our calling as believers, and with the glorious destiny that awaits them who know and trust God.

3. Growth in knowledge (i: 5-11). "And besides all this, giving all diligence, add to your faith," etc. The term "add" scarcely expresses the apostle's thought. It is a somewhat peculiar word originally used of one who supplied all the equipments and furnishings needed by the Greek Chorus. The idea of supply should certainly be retained: "In your faith supply virtue." He does not ask that faith be supplied; that these believers already had. But starting with faith as the foundation of all, let the other excellencies and virtues be richly and abundantly furnished. Let there be no lack of equipment here, for far more is it needed than was furnishing by the Chorus of the old Greek tragedy. What a magnificent cluster the apostle here gives! Each springs out of the other; each is strengthened by the other. "In your faith supply virtue," or fortitude, manliness; and let virtue supply "knowledge." Knowledge by itself alone tends to "puff up." But tempered by the others, by self-control, by patience, by godliness, by love, knowledge becomes one of the most essential and

powerful excellencies in the Christian character. Paul begins his list of the "fruits of the Spirit" with love (Gal. v: 22). Peter ends his with love. It is like a chain, each link holds fast to its fellow, and is a part of the whole. It matters little at which end of the chain we begin the count, for the links form a unity, and to touch one is to touch all. Each is strong by the strength derived from the other. The apostle urges diligence to furnish all these; "adding on your part all diligence." God freely gives what we need and all we need; let it be ours by conscious effort to add to the supply.

The motive to such diligence lies in this, (a) that no barrenness nor unfruitfulness in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ may blight our lives; (b) and that thereby may be richly supplied to us the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The inerrancy of the sources of saving knowledge (i: 16-21).

The apostle rests his truth on two trustworthy facts: (a) the fact and meaning of the Saviour's Transfiguration; (b) the fact of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Taken together these two great facts invest his teaching with infallible certainty and authority.

I. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." Pagan mythology, so widely prevailing at the time in Asia Minor, was composed largely of *myths* (Peter's word) which were skilfully

framed and poetically embellished. The cabalism of the Jews, heathen myths, and the wild vagaries that were springing up in the bosom of the Christian Church itself, had no place whatever in the message of the Gospel nor in the apostolic teaching and preaching. What Peter and his fellow-apostles taught was the very truth of God, and this, without admixture of human wisdom or speculation, had been made known to the "elect sojourners" for their instruction and comfort. The teaching was with absolute fidelity and certainty. For Peter and James and John were eye-witnesses of the majestic scene on the mount of Transfiguration. They saw with their own eyes the super-human brightness and splendor with which the Lord's person glowed, they saw the two heavenly visitants who appeared in glory and who conversed with Jesus, they heard the voice of God out of the cloud, and they beheld that cloud which is always the symbol of the Divine Presence. If any men ever were competent and credible in their testimony surely these were the men. This knowledge they had given out to their fellow-believers.

Peter intimates that the Transfiguration was at once the pledge and a specimen of the Lord's Advent and of the Kingdom of God. The Synoptic Gospels which record it (Matt. xvii: 1-8; Mark ix: 2-8; Luke ix: 28-36), leave little room for doubt that the Lord so intended it. He said, "There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see," etc. Lillie and others hold that this promise had its fulfilment in the spectacle of the Transfiguration. The

view is supported by the variously expressed objects they were to see before they died. In Matthew it is, "till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." In Mark, "till they see the Kingdom of God come with power." In Luke, "till they see the Kingdom of God." Two chief things they should see—the coming of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom. Peter appears to have both in view when he mentions the "power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Mark's words, "Kingdom come with power," answers to Peter's "power." And Matthew's "Son of Man coming" answers to Peter's "coming." It seems certain that in some deep sense the apostle saw in the Transfiguration a pledge and sample of the future advent of Christ and the establishment of God's Kingdom in power and glory over the whole earth.

The scene itself witnesses to the same general fact. (1) The Lord's person suddenly shone with a majesty and glory such as commonly was hid from mortal gaze. "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." In heaven He is encircled with the transcendent glories of the throne of God. But when He shall come again to our world it will be in His own glory, such as was displayed in its dazzling beauty before the overwhelmed gaze of His disciples. (2) Two men from the unseen world appeared also in glory, Moses and Elijah. They represented the Law and the Prophets. They represented much more. The one had died, and he of mortals alone had the distinguished honor, the matchless dignity, of being buried by the Lord Himself (Deut. xxxiv: 5, 6).

Moses stood for the sleeping saints who shall be raised up in glory when Christ comes. Elijah for living believers who shall be "changed" (1 Cor. xv: 51, 52), and who like Elijah shall not pass through death (1 Cor. xvi; 1 Thess. iv). (3) Three men were present, witnesses of the wondrous scene, who in some measure shared in it, who were in the flesh and who stand for mankind living when Christ shall return to the world for its redemption. (4) There was the Shekinah Cloud, symbol of the Divine Presence, and the voice of God speaking from the cloud. Here was nearness of the Father, two glorified saints from the unseen world, Jesus shining with dazzling splendor and beauty, and three mortal men participants of the majestic display.

Peter adds, "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure" (i: 19). This is the rendering of the Revision, and there can be little doubt of its correctness. The Transfiguration has confirmed what the prophets had said touching the future and God's purposes to make this earth once more a Paradise and thus restore it to the lost fellowship of heaven. Every word He has spoken is to be made good to men, to the globe, to the dead and to the living friends of God. For Christ has suffered, His glories must follow; the august proof of it is Christ's Transfiguration, the Cloud and Voice of God, the presence of Moses and Elijah, the presence also of the disciples, and the shining person of the Lord. All this, the apostle affirms, confirms in a most cogent fashion the prophetic Scripture, and pledges the fulfilment of every work spoken

through the prophets. The historical fact of the Transfiguration is a signal proof that Peter and his fellow-apostles did not follow "cunningly devised fables when they made known to Christians the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. The second fact is the inspiration of the men of God, i: 20, 21. "No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." "Knowing this first," *i. e.*, we recognize this as primary truth, we settle definitely in our minds when we sit down to the study of prophecy. "Private interpretation," *i. e.*, "private" in the sense of "one's own;" "interpretation," *i. e.*, origin, origination. Prophecy never comes by the exercise of the prophet's own gifts and talents, nor by his shrewd guessing, his wise calculation, his profound and prolonged thought. No; it is neither by man's unaided talent, nor by man's application, it is wholly of God. From Him it comes, by Him it is revealed. It was brought to the prophet, as it is brought to us. It is not to be tied up to the times of the prophet, nor is it to be explained and unfolded by man's device. "Holy men," Peter, John, Paul, and all the others, "spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."

5. Peter's Three Worlds, iii: 5-13. Of course three globes are not meant, but three vast epochs, three enormous periods in the history of the earth. The apostle divides its history into three clearly defined sections, and treats each of these with some fulness of detail; at least he mentions the characteristic features of each, and to these we are now to attend.

(1) "The world that then was" (iii: 6). This is Peter's first world. It was the antediluvian world, the world which the Flood destroyed (vs. 5, 6; Gen. vi, vii). The commonly received chronology makes the duration of that ancient world 1656 years. Its end was distinguished by colossal wickedness and apostasy from God, and the divine judgment which swept away the entire race with the exception of eight souls, Noah and his family.

Scoffers in Peter's time asked no doubt with a sneer, "Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." These mockers appeal to the continuity of natural processes, to the inviolability of nature's laws, and they assert that on these grounds there never will be an Advent of Christ and judgment of the world, as Christians believe and teach. Natural law goes on without interruption and without a break. Nature keeps her track with unwavering precision. There is no sign of any change; no catastrophe is likely, indeed is possible. The promise of His coming fails. These skeptics wilfully forget that a mighty cataclism did once overwhelm the world. The Flood drowned every living thing save those within the sheltering Ark. God had said, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them: and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen. vi: 13). "And every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens" (Gen. vii:

23). It was a worldwide disaster that happened to that old antediluvian age, and its end was frightful indeed. Since, then, this is a historical fact the infidel question of the mockers is foolish and false. The world that then was perished under God's fearful judgment, and He has assured us that the Lord Jesus shall come again from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1: 7, 8).

The Flood must have profoundly affected the conditions of life on the earth. The physical changes introduced by it seem to have been very great, greater indeed than most students of the Bible ascribe to it. If the conclusions derived from personal examination by Prof. G. Frederick Wright be accepted as true, and no geologist of the age is more worthy of credence than he, that the Deluge prevailed over a very large portion of the earth's surface, and that a submergence of the land took place, then we can readily perceive how deeply affected were the conditions of life. The world appears to be different after the disaster; it was no longer fitted to be the home of men who before it lived for centuries. Longevity almost immediately began to change; life began to shorten, and in a comparatively brief time it sank to the term of years that now bounds it. Noah lived 950 years (Gen. ix: 29). Shem, his son born before the Flood, died at the age of 600, a reduction of 350 years in a single generation. With Noah's grandson, Arphaxad, there is further reduction: he died at the age of 438 years. In five gen-

erations life was shortened to but little more than 200 years. Is it not possible, is it not probable that the Deluge brought about such changes in climate, in soil, and in the atmosphere as to make the long life of the antediluvian age impossible? At any rate, we may well conjecture that the conditions so favorable to a prolonged period of existence in "the world that then was" passed away under the awful judgment of God. Floods of water are not purifiers, floods of fire are, as we shall presently see.

(2) Peter's second world is, "the heavens and the earth which are now" (iii: 7). It is the present order of things in sky and earth that is meant. The world that now is—it is a singular sort of expression, and seems to indicate that it is neither permanent nor final. Hence the apostle goes on to say that it is "stored up for fire" (R. V.), or, better, as the margin reads, "stored with fire," *i. e.*, it contains within itself the agency by which it may yet be consumed. The world that now is, is held in strict custody, reserved, not for a second deluge, but for fire. The advent of Christ and the judgment which shall ensue upon His coming are constantly associated in Scripture with fire, with a mighty conflagration. "Our God shall come and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him" (Psalms 1: 3). "For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh" (Isa. lxvi: 15, 16). Thus likewise in

the vision of Daniel: "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him. . . . I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." Nor is the New Testament silent on this point: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire" (2 Thess. i: 7-9).

These passages of Scripture and others of like import indicate that *fire* will be one of the physical attendants on the Lord's coming. But fire is not the only one. Voices, lightnings, thunders and earthquakes will also accompany that transcendent event. Three times does the Apocalypse testify to this fact, Rev. viii: 5; xi: 19; xvi: 18. These tremendous forces of nature will be employed as agents for the punishment of the ungodly and the apostates of that Day. But the judgments at the Advent, dreadful as they assuredly will be, appear to be inflicted mainly on God's enemies, the Dragon, the Beast, the False Prophet, and the vast multitudes that shall be deceived by these extraordinary foes. (See Rev. xii, xiii, xix). These are chief objects of the Divine wrath, and they appear at the time of the end. These passages, however, fall far short of Peter's language. They say nothing of the melting of the elements with fervent heat, and the burning of the earth and its works, as Peter does: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter iii: 10). The

Day of the Lord is not one of four and twenty hours, but a prolonged period. The apostle intimates that it will cover a thousand years, *i. e.*, the whole time of the Millennium (Rev. xx). It is of the close of this period that Peter speaks, not of its beginning, as John mainly does in the Revelation.

Ample materials are stored up in the earth itself for its consumption by fire. The oils and the gases so inflammable and destructive in their energy can, when the time arrives, speedily reduce the order of things now existing to ashes. Peter's language does not signify the annihilation of the earth, nor the dissolution of the atmosphere, nor the end of time. Fire does not annihilate, it dissolves existing combinations which may be recombined under new and different forms. He speaks of the cosmical convulsions and physical revolutions of both earth and sky, such as shall far surpass those of the Flood. But at the close of the Day of the Lord, when God shall have wrought His whole work in the earth, something new and transcendently glorious and beautiful shall supervene.

(3) The third world is this: "But, according to his promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter iii: 13). It is the new world of righteousness and blessedness forever. It is Paradise restored. With the overthrow of the antediluvian world there began the new history of our race and the new order of things. With the destruction by fire of the present order there will follow the fulfilment of the majestic predictions and promises contained in the last two chapters of the

book of Revelation. This will be the eternal state, it will succeed the glories of the Millennial age, itself infinitely more glorious than that. The Spirit is careful not to say that in the new heavens and new earth righteousness shall *reign*, for that would mean the millennial reign; but He says righteousness shall *dwell* therein; it is the permanent, abiding state; it is eternity.

In Rev. xxi: 1-8 the New Testament seer, John the Apostle, reveals somewhat of the grandeur and the glory of that sorrowless state which is foretold. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." The fulfilment of this sublime prediction will involve a fundamental change in the constitution of the world that now is. Life would be impossible if the sea was no more. But He who made the world and all it contains can surely recreate it, clearing it of every vestige of sin and misery, of its imperfections and its limitations, fitting it for the dwelling of perfect beings and of God's supreme glory. Immanuel will dwell with the holy inhabitants of the new earth and in the new Jerusalem which is to descend into the glorified earth. Then will pass away forever death, mourning, crying and pain, and deathless life and painless bliss will never more be interrupted nor disturbed. John is bidden, Write, for these things are true and faithful; they shall not fail to come to pass.

"Earth, thou grain of sand on the shore of the Universe of God; thou Bethlehem, amongst the princely

cities of the heavens, thou art, and remainest, the Loved One amongst ten thousand suns and worlds, the Chosen of God! On thee has the Lord a great work to complete."

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Although no name is attached to this Scripture, it is very generally believed to be the production of the Apostle John. Witnesses to its authorship may be traced back almost to the end of the first century, and they had the best opportunity to know and to weigh the evidence. Its close connection with the Gospel according to John in thought and style must lead the reader to the conviction that both are the production of the same pen.

It, with the other six of this group of epistles, is well called Catholic, or General, for it is not addressed to any body of Christians in particular, as are James and Peter, but to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no age or people, no church, whether local or national, that may not claim it for its own and to which it may not unreservedly be applied. The two short epistles which follow this bear the names or designations to which they are addressed. But this has no inscription. It begins without salutation, and ends without benediction. The writer sometimes uses the first person when speaking of himself, but never mentions his own name.

The style is one of artless simplicity and of singular beauty and purity. The sentences considered separately are marvellously clear, concise and profound. Each is perfect in itself and contains a distinct and

lucid thought. The style is sententious, at times almost aphoristic. On this account it is often difficult to trace the connection between one sentence and another, one paragraph and another. Nevertheless, its unity is neither imperilled nor obscured by the style, its structure is flawless. It is built on a very distinct and noble plan, and the plan binds its parts into a harmonious whole.

It abounds in repetitions. The same thought in almost identical language is repeated; often the idea being put in the positive, then immediately in the negative form. A most extraordinary criticism has been founded on this characteristic of the epistle, viz.: that it indicates the writer's old age and the "rambling prattle of an old man," who pours out pious sentiments and reflections without method or aim. It is nothing of the sort. Instead of displaying weakness or garrulity, First John is the profoundest of all the Catholic epistles and the most difficult to expound. No one who has really studied it, who has gone down into its depths, or even tried to, could for a moment accept such a callow criticism as this. The repetitions spring from the nature of the writing and from the structure of John's mind, for he is of all the New Testament writers the most subtle, penetrating and analytic. He does not reason as does Paul, nor argue; he reveals; he sets his truth in the clearest light and lets it do its own work. For John is a Seer; piercing insight into things is his great gift. Two features specially mark the epistle—the majesty of the

thoughts and the simplicity of the language-features which indicate the highest quality of genius.

Antithesis is of frequent use in First John. Over against each thought is often placed its opposite in sharp contrast. Thus light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hate, life and death, children of God and children of the devil, follow one another in impressive alternation (cf. i: 8-10; iii: 8-10; iv: 4-6). Owing to this structure of sentences there is a sort of rythmical cadence sometimes observable, and one has arranged a portion of the first chapter as if it were verse:

If we say we have no sin,
We deceive ourselves,
And the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,
And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned,
We make Him a liar;
And His word is not in us.

“In this instance it will be observed that we pass from one opposite to another and back again: but that to which we return covers more ground than the original position, and is a distinct advance upon it.”

Force and impressiveness lie in this method of instruction. Such sentences remain in one's memory. The distinction between Christians and unbelievers is more sharply brought out thus than perhaps it could otherwise be.

Its authority is another mark of the epistle. While throughout there is abundant evidence of John's tender affection for those whom he addresses, yet there is a tone of authority which is manifest everywhere. There is a dignity, a magisterial gravity, that makes the epistle both apostolic and commanding. There is no claim of authority set up, no assertion that he possesses it, but a quiet word is spoken, a resistless strength displayed, from which there is no appeal, and a judgment passed that is felt to be infallible and final. Thus, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Of him who claims to know the Lord and keeps not His commandments John says he is a liar (ii: 4); he that denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar (ii: 22): love of the brethren is the sure sign of being saved; hate of the brother the sign of being a murderer (iii: 14, 15). Like Paul in Corinthians and Galatians, like James and Peter, John writes with an authority that cannot be challenged, for we feel, we cannot but feel, that what he says and on what he passes sentence is the very truth of God.

Its finality is the last thing to be mentioned here. The Gospel by John is the final Gospel, not only in point of time, but also in contents and aim. It completes the other three. The First Epistle of John is likewise final. This is true in point of time. It was probably written near the close of the apostle's life, *i. e.*, the close of the first century. Perhaps somewhere between A. D. 90-95 it was written. John speaks of those who denied that Jesus Christ was come in the

flesh (iv: 3). He seems to refer to certain sects that began to flourish about that time that held the Son of God could not ally Himself with flesh, with matter, for this is essentially evil, and the Divine Being could not come into contact with it without being contaminated and degraded; hence Jesus was only a creature who received special endowment at His baptism for His great mission by the Spirit of God, but who died as a mere man, the Spirit having left Him at the time He cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

The epistle speaks of Antichrist and of the spirit of Antichrist, and of the many Antichrists, as if these were already in the world (ii: 18, 22; iv: 3). The uniform teaching of the apostles is that this adversary, Antichrist, is one of the very last foes of the cause and people of God, that his time will be but short, and that he will receive his doom at the hands of the Saviour Himself. Hence John writes, "Little children, it is the last hour." The final conflict is at hand, the last terrible battle is soon to be fought and won; therefore, be separate, vigilant, expectant.

ANALYSIS.

First John seems to fall into four parts, each of which will repay careful and earnest study.

Part I. Introduction, chap. i: 1-4.

Part II. Fellowship, i: 5—ii: 29.

Part III. Sonship, iii—v: 12.

Part IV. Conclusion, v: 13-21.

JOHN'S MESSAGE.

I. The Introduction, i: 1-4. Reading these four verses somewhat casually one might suppose that John's object is to tell what he and his fellow-apostles knew personally of the Saviour, of their intimacy with Him, and the blessed companionship they had with Him. But the apostle is not dealing here with the great fact of the "historical Christ," precious as that truth is, nor with the opportunities he had of knowing Him, of entering into close acquaintance with Him. All this may be hinted at in these verses, but this is not John's subject nor the aim of his writing. Rather, his purpose is to instruct Christians in the doctrine of Eternal Life—its source, nature, possession, maintenance and blessedness. Law promised life upon obedience; Eternal Life was brought by Jesus Christ. It was with the Father, it has been manifested in the person of the Lord Jesus, and by Him is given to all who are in Him, so that they and He have fellowship, actual partnership in the Life which is from God and which unites with God. Mark some of the main features of this Introduction: (1) The Eternal Life which was with the Father is now manifested in Jesus Christ, the Word of Life. He has brought it near to dying men, He gives it to all who receive Him. (2) John and his fellow-apostles were eyewitnesses of this manifestation of the Life. Their testimony is corroborated by three of the most trustworthy of our senses, viz.: hearing, sight, touch. John and his fellows heard Him, saw Him, gazed upon Him, handled Him. Note the climax; seeing is

more than hearing; prolonged looking is more than mere seeing; handling is more than all. (3) Participation in the Life brings into fellowship with the Father and the Son. (4) John writes that all believers may have the same fellowship, and so have a full and blessed joy.

GOD IS LIGHT.

II. Fellowship, i: 5—ii: 28. This is the first great theme John discusses, rather, that he opens to us. Understand by fellowship communion, partnership, and this with God and with one another. The passage treating of this theme embraces these points—its nature, its maintenance, its recovery when interrupted, and its fruits. He does not fail to tell us how we may know we have the fellowship, and what the signs are of its presence and of its absence.

I. Character of Him with Whom fellowship is enjoyed, i: 5. "God is light." The apostle John gives us three most remarkable statements about God; each of them may be regarded as a definition of what God is in Himself. These three declarations are, "God is a Spirit" (John iv: 24); "God is light" (1 John i: 5); "God is love" (1 John iv: 8). In all three the predicate has no article, "either definite or indefinite" (Plummer). "We are not told that God is the Spirit, or the Light, or the Love; nor (in all probability) that He is a Spirit, or a light." But God is Spirit, is Light, is Love: spirit, light, love are His very nature. "They are not mere attributes, like mercy and justice: they are Himself." They reveal to us in some measure what God is in Himself. The first relates to His

Being, His Essence: He is Spirit, therefore He is without form, invisible, yet personal, individual, unchangeable. The second, Light, relates to His spirituality, His infinite purity and holiness. The third, Love, to His disposition. United the three tell us what God is. No philosophy, no religion, ever rose to such a height as this. How infinitely removed is this majestic revelation of God from the Zeus of the Greeks, Jupiter of the Romans, and Odin of our Saxon and Celtic ancestors. As Light God unites in Himself purity and clearness, beauty and glory, holiness and knowledge, and these in their perfections. John adds, "And darkness in him there is none at all," the emphatic order of his words. This intensifies the preceding thought; as Light God is subject to no darkness whatever; no obscuring of Him, no clouding of His purity is possible. As Light He is without admixture, abridgement, or change. This is the pure and holy Being with whom fellowship is to be had.

2. How Fellowship with God is maintained, i: 6—ii: 2. In this section of the epistle the apostle exhibits how fellowship with God is sustained, and how it is recovered when it is interrupted or suspended. The teaching is exceedingly practical and searching.

(a) To have fellowship with God involves walking in the light, i: 6, 7. One must be in sympathy with His mind and will, must in some degree be like Him. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos iii: 3). Walking means the daily life. To walk in the light signifies living in the element where God dwells, for God is light. To dwell thus with Him

presupposes that one is at peace with Him, that he loves His presence, and delights in communion with Him. Harmony with Him in what He loves and what He hates is indispensable to companionship with Him. But one may claim fellowship, yet deceive himself (ver. 6). (Note, the word "if" is repeated in each verse of the chapter from the 6th to the end.) The false claim is easily detected. If the one making it lives in sin, walks according to his own will and not God's, walks as he pleases, his claim is false, he lies and does not speak the truth. John's language is most emphatic and uncompromising.

(b) Application of Christ's blood, ver. 7: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It alone keeps us in the fellowship, and restores it when interrupted. Note the force of the present tense, *cleanseth*: it makes us clean, it keeps us clean. Christ's atonement effects two great results: it justifies the sinner in God's presence, and it sanctifies his life. Note the force of the singular number here "all sin;" *i. e.*, every sin, every kind and sort of sin. The blood purifies completely and entirely; it includes the whole person, the heart, the mind, the will and affections, in short, the life.

(c) Confession of sin and its pardon, i: 8, 10. Let us not fail to see how radical the teaching is touching sin in believers and its forgiveness as the condition of fellowship. John does not blink matters; with all the authority of an inspired apostle he writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." One who walks

in the light—may he not become at length free from sin? “If we say we do not have sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” The sentence is definite and precise: “If we say we do not have sin.” No Christian, however upright in character and blameless in conduct, is freed from inherent sin. Sin is still in him, though he has the mastery over it. It dwells in him, though he does not dwell in it. One who says he does not have sin in him is self-deceived. He does not deceive God, nor those who live with him, he deceives only himself. *He leads himself astray.* He ought to know better than to say such a thing, and he might; but he shuts his eyes to his actual state, and so “the truth is not in him.”

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Unconfessed sin prevents fellowship. The holy Lord cannot hold communion with a self-righteous and self-satisfied sinner, nor can He with a saint who cherishes such a temper. The next best thing to not being a sinner at all is to confess one’s sins. God is faithful to His promise to forgive when we honestly and truly confess, and righteous in doing so. He is just when He justifies him who believes in Jesus (Rom. iii: 26); He is just when He forgives His child who confesses his wrongdoing and repents of it. This gracious provision restores to fellowship when sin has interrupted it, or suspended it altogether.

Fellowship with God is maintained by Christ’s advocacy of our cause before the Father, ii: 1, 2: “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ the righteous." "Advocate" is the same term which is used to designate the Holy Spirit as the Comforter (John xiv: 16, 26). It denotes the Saviour's intercession on the behalf of His people. He pleads their cause, He secures their pardon, peace and joy; He obtains for them the mercy and the grace they so constantly need. His plea always avails because He is "righteous." In Himself, in His ways and works here on earth, in His death and resurrection, He has fulfilled all righteousness, has obeyed perfectly the Father's will, has glorified Him; and therefore Him the Father heareth always. Moreover, He is the propitiation for our sins, and on the ground of His finished redemption God justifies, pardons and saves all who trust in Him. It is thus that fellowship with God is maintained and restored when once it has been forfeited by disobedience and trespass.

3. Requirements of Fellowship with God, ii: 3-17. How may we know that we are children of God? The inquiry is of vital moment to every Christian. All want assurance, indubitable evidence that we belong to the heavenly family, and hence are in the light and are walking with God. In this section are infallible marks given by the Spirit Himself by which we may determine our state and standing before Him.

(a) Obedience. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (ii: 3). As if John said, "I give you an infallible sign of salvation and of fellowship with the Lord, viz.: obedience to His will." Every word in this short sentence is significant and emphatic. Into "commandments" he pours a

wealth of meaning. He never uses the term *law* to express the rule of Christian obedience. In John's writings commandments generally denote the Saviour's injunctions (cf. ver. 5).

A Christian is one who obeys his Lord always, not to secure eternal life for this he already has, but because he is alive unto God, because he has come to know savingly the Lord Jesus. Christ is Lord. He has the right to command, we have the right only to obey. Disobedience is lawlessness (iii: 4). A child of God cannot be habitually disobedient to the Master's will. He cannot be lawless. We come to know that we do know Him when we habitually seek to keep His commandments. "Keep" is a favorite word with the apostle. More than a score of times he employs it touching the Lord's word and will. To *keep* is to guard and regard, to observe and obey with steadfastness and zeal. Thus "we do know that we know him." Our consciousness attests it; in the central deeps of our being we know certain things; we cannot be argued, nor ridiculed, nor frightened out of our knowledge: "We know that we know him;" we have personal acquaintance with Him as our Deliverer and Friend, and we reach this sure knowledge by love and keeping His commandments.

What is implied in such obedience? First, a filial spirit. No formalist, no legalist, no self-righteous person can by any possibility love and obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus. A child of God alone can do so, and every child does it in greater or less degree; he *must*, it is the essence of his new nature. It

implies faith. And this is his commandment, "That we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (iii: 23). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (v: 1). It implies love. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (v: 2, 3). We know His love when we cherish His words (John xiv: 21; xv: 10, 12). These three principles, the filial spirit, faith, and love, distinguish Christians. They are not found in the ungodly, nor can they be simulated, counterfeited, or put on like a dress; they are of the heart and soul. By them we know that we know Him. Every one who loves His will, is responsive to His voice, and sensitive to His commands, may press the glad truth to his heart that he is saved.

(b) Love to God: "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby we know that we are in him" (ii: 5). "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv: 23). "His word" is more comprehensive than "his commandments;" it embraces all He has revealed in the Scriptures; it is the sum total of all He has been pleased to communicate to us. Our Lord kept the Father's word perfectly in all its parts, and in Him indeed was the Father's love perfected. Let any Christian perfectly keep it and his love to God will likewise be perfect. But in the degree that we love and obey Him we have the assurance that His love is in us and abides. Such love fellowship with Him requires.

(c) Abiding in Him: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (ii: 6). Abiding in Christ is another requirement of fellowship. Abiding in Him is somewhat additional to being in Him. It is possible to be in Him and yet not consciously to abide in Him. The one state differs from the other not in kind but in degree. Abiding in Him expresses the idea of continuing in Him, being actively alive to our nearness and the blessedness of our relations with Him. He who keeps up close and unbroken union with Christ is the most useful Christian. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John xv: 5). He that abides in Him has answers to his prayers. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv: 7). There is a suggestive balance of terms in the verses we have been considering. This diagram may serve to show the balance:

Fellowship=Knowing God;
 Knowing God=Loving Him;
 Loving Him=Being in Him;
 Being in Him=Abiding in Him.

The parallel presents a well-defined example of biblical climax. If any one step in the parallel is absent, fellowship is not perfect, it is marred, perhaps suspended altogether. For fellowship with God rests on union with Christ and abiding in Him. This gracious relation secures obedience, love and walk. The same general doctrine is found in John xv: 1-18.

(d) Loving the Brotherhood: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him" (ii: 10). Love is an essential principle in fellowship; love to God, to men, to the household of faith particularly. The principle is both old and new; old as Moses (Lev. xix: 18; Deut. vi: 5): new, because taught and exemplified by the Saviour. Love marks the difference between a believer and an unbeliever: the one is in the light, the other in darkness; the one is a light-center, the other a stumbling-block. A lamppost lighted is a welcome help; without a light, a menace.

(e) Separation from the world: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him" (ii: 15-17). By the world John means the whole order of things which is estranged from God, which is hostile to Him and to His cause and His people. The world is God's enemy (Jas. iv: 4), and it is soon to pass away under His righteous judgment. The world consists of three things that are hateful to God:

"Lust of the flesh"—the strong, passionate craving of the unrenewed heart for things evil and forbidden; inordinate yearning for the gratification of one's own desires, the accomplishment of one's own plans and purpose, right or wrong: "Lust of the eyes"—the fierce passion to see and enjoy the things the flesh longs for, that restless, insatiable delight in what pleases the flesh, what pampers and satisfies it, for what feeds the basest appetites of our nature. The

lust of the flesh is fed by the lust of the eyes. These two "lusts" are acquisitive, they seize and hold all that the sinful nature craves. But there is a third: "the Pride of Life." The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes are at bottom selfish and lawless. "Pride of life" is the same spirit of utter selfishness expending itself in vain show and pomp. It will lavishly squander wealth in proud, ostentatious display. It will intrigue and fawn if thereby it may win the notice of the illustrious and the great, and strut with haughty arrogance among its equals and inferiors. The first two are egoism of the meanest sort; the third is egotism pretentious and shallow to the last degree. All belong to a life that is false, hollow and bitterly disappointing. A Christian is bidden stand aloof from this "world." He must heed these solemn words of John, the still more solemn words of James: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be the friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." A holy separation from this *world* must be maintained if fellowship with God is to be real and permanent.

(f) Anointing of the Spirit, ii: 20, 27. The anointing which believers receive is the Spirit Himself and not a gift or gifts from Him. It is affirmed that they who have this sacred chrism "know all things," that it teaches them so that they may be independent of mere human teachers, that by it they are able to detect false teaching. By this is not meant that any new faculty or organ of the soul is imparted so that believers may know universal truth; not this; rather,

it denotes divine truth as distinguished from error which breaks fellowship and tends to stifle it altogether. We may grieve the Spirit so as to hinder His work in us and thus interrupt our fellowship with God (Eph. iv: 30).

(g) Abiding in Christ, ii: 28: "And now, little children, abide in him." This with the next verse concludes the second main division of the epistle, and the last thing the apostle has to say to the children is, Abide in Christ. He has repeatedly urged them to do this; he does so again because Christ ere long is coming to the earth, and our relation to Him and our reward likewise will then be gloriously manifested. John is anxious that we should maintain uninterrupted fellowship that he and his fellow-workers should not be ashamed in His presence as unfaithful shepherds, as slothful servants.

GOD IS LOVE.

III. Sonship, iii-v: 12. This section of the epistle may be entitled, The Children of God and the Children of the Devil contrasted. The antithesis in Section II is Light and Darkness. The antithesis in Section III is a double one: Righteousness and Sin; or, Love and Hate.

Chap. ii: 29 is the connecting link between the two sections: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Here is evidence both of sonship and of fellowship. He whose daily life is one of obedience and

uprightness gives proof that he is born of God. The like nature is demonstrated by the like fruits. Note the use of the present tense, "doeth;" it is characteristic of First John. It denotes a habit of life, the prevailing principle of one's life, not a single act, but a succession of acts which make up the life. The apostle sharply contrasts "doing righteousness" and "doing sin" (iii: 7, 8, 9). The fundamental idea is the same in both expressions, viz.: that it is not one act alone that is meant, but habitual practice, the life-conduct of a man.

We may now add other items to the parallelism of the epistle:

Being in Him=Abiding in Him;
 Abiding in Him=Anointed of Him;
 Anointed of Him=Born of Him;
 Born of Him=Doing Righteousness.

1. The origin and the destiny of God's children, iii: 1-3. On this great passage only brief notes can be made, not an exposition. The authorized version has "sons of God;" the English and American revisions alike have "children;" and beyond question this is preferable. Paul generally speaks of the "sons," and of "adoption," for he has in mind the legal standing and the privileges of Christians. John scarcely ever uses the term sons, but always children. (Rev. xxi: 7 is perhaps an exception.) And this name which he gives them includes two ideas, their birth into the heavenly family, and the filial spirit by which they are animated. John does not dwell on the adoption of

sons into God's household—this is Paul's theme—but on their birth. His words (*tekna, teknia*) "little children" is exactly expressed by the Scotch *bairns*, born ones. According to Paul we receive the place and the rights of children in God's family; according to John, the nature and the name of children. The revisions add the precious and assuring words, "and we are." We are not only called the children of God, but we are.

The origin of our sonship is here traced to the Father's love: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and *such* we are." It is not so much the magnitude of the Father's love that is here extolled; it is its quality, its character. That He should love us, exiles and outcasts, ragged and starving prodigals as we are, and that He should bring us into His holy family as children, and give us not the name only, but also the nature and the character of children! What a wonder of love this is, "all love surpassing." And yet this is what He has done for every one who receives and believes His testimony about His Son Jesus Christ. "Beloved, now are we the children of God." Children we who trust in Christ are called, and children we are. No doubt is felt or expressed. The epistle is full of assurances. "For this cause the world knoweth us not because it knew him not." Natural men knew not Jesus Christ when He was here; no more do they know His children. Really to know a child of God is to be a child of God. I know a man because I have a man's nature; a brute

cannot know me, for it has not my nature. If one knows not God in Christ, how can he know them who belong to God's family? "Beloved, now are we children of God." We do not much look like it as to outward appearance. The resemblance between what we now are and what we shall be can hardly be traced. We are pilgrims traveling in disguise at present, weary often and travel-stained, but by and by the disguise shall drop off, and we shall appear in His likeness, clothed with robes of unsullied light and beauty, for "we shall be like him and see him as he is." That will be the glorious day of His espousals and of our crowning. The hope of seeing Him and of being like Him prompts to holiness of life and sanctity of spirit. Therefore it is added, "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

2. iii: 4-24. These verses furnish two main proofs of Sonship; rather, they point out the two main features in Sonship, viz.: righteousness and love.

(1) Righteousness is evidence of Sonship (iii: 4-10). Negatively, doing sin is doing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness (ver. 4). Doing, as already noted, means practice, habit, persistent conduct. Whoever thus sins, lives in sin, habitually practices sin, has neither seen Christ nor known Him. Positively, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous." That is, one who loves righteousness, who lives in that sphere, and who makes righteousness the chief end of his being, is of God and belongs to His household. Opposition to sin is the controlling principle of one born of God.

Love of sin and the persistent doing of sin is the controlling principle of one belonging to the devil, who is the habitual sinner from the beginning.

The child of God does not live in the practice of sin, he lives in the practice of righteousness. Sin is in him, but he does not live in it; holiness is the realm where he seeks to dwell. John's doctrine on this matter is summed up in iii: 9. It is a difficult verse, but its main idea is clear: "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God" (R. V.). Sinless perfection certainly is not meant, for that would contradict i: 8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Some hold that it is the new nature or life in the child of God that does not sin and that cannot sin; but that the old nature which is still in the saint does sin. But this view involves a sort of double consciousness and a divided responsibility, which contradicts our experience. It is our whole self that seeks to do righteousness, and it is our whole self that sins; otherwise, responsibility for evil conduct would largely disappear, and the worst type of antinomianism would ensue. The meaning of the verse appears to be chiefly this: he who is begotten of God does not love sin nor live in the practice of it; he hates it, and abhors himself when he commits it; he devoutly seeks total deliverance from it. He that is not born of God loves sin and is its slave. The Seed that abides in him probably is the new, the divine nature which he receives in regeneration, and which is not extirpated when even

gross sin is committed. "He cannot sin" signifies that it is impossible a believer should live in evil and make it the habit of his life. He cannot live in it, it is foreign to his new nature.

3. Love is evidence of Sonship, iii: 11-24. Love is the keyword of this portion of the chapter and much that follows. It runs through the rest of the epistle. It occurs 16 times as a substantive, 25 times as a verb, and 5 times as a verbal adjective. No wonder John makes so much of it when he opens the chapter with the note of supreme admiration and wonderment at the display of the Father's love. Behold! He names us children, and loves us as such.

Brotherly love is the chief content of the Gospel message: "Love one another." Jerome relates that when John was too old and feeble to preach he had one little exhortation which he did not cease to repeat when carried into the assembly, "Little children, love one another. It is the Lord's command, and it is enough."

Hate is love's opposite and its enemy; it is Cain-like and murderous. Hate, malignity is foreign to the real Christian spirit. Hatred is deadly. Love is the infallible mark of spiritual life. "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren." Life is not the cause of love but its fruit. If we have the fruit we may be sure we have the life.

Love gladly goes out in helpfulness of others. It is practical, generous and self-sacrificing. If not, it is not real. If we say we love God and yet refuse or neglect to help those who are destitute, how dwells

the love of God in us? (cf. James ii: 15, 16). The man who withholds aid from the needy may with his tongue say he loves God, but with his hand and his heart he denies it.

iii: 24 introduces for the first time in the epistle the Holy Spirit, and we come to know our sonship by the gift of the Spirit who bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.

4. Spiritual Discernment an evidence of Sonship, iv: 1-6. This passage treats of false spirits and of their detection and repulsion.

The right to judge teachers and to test doctrine belongs to all Christians. Our Lord Himself imposed this duty on His people (Matt. vii: 15-19). The necessity of such trial is recognized: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Christ foretold their advent (Matt. xxiv: 24). Paul encountered not a few of them. The world is filled with them at the present time. Some of them teach partial truth, that which is palatable, while that which is distasteful and repugnant to the natural heart is suppressed. Others teach error and nothing else. In our day as not for ages past Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and deceives even the most wary and the cautious. Never perhaps has there been more need of trying the spirits than now.

The apostle furnishes two infallible tests of both teachers and teaching (vers. 2-6). The first relates to Christ's person and work. What do they say of

Him? What is their doctrine concerning Him? Do they deny His mission? His Deity? His Virgin birth? His resurrection? If they do, then they are of the spirit of Antichrist, they are enemies of the blessed Lord Jesus, and therefore no believer in Him can hold fellowship with them. This is an infallible test indeed, for every false prophet, every heretical teacher invariably bears false witness against the Son of God.

The second is their following: "They are of the world; the world heareth them." God's children are not of this company nor can be. "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." Whoever is born of God knows the voice of the Son of God that speaks to him through the ministry of the Gospel. That voice he hears and heeds. "He that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." These are sure tests both of profession and of character.

5. Love the supreme evidence of the new birth, iv: 7-21. This is the third time the apostle adduces love as the prime attestation of sonship and fellowship. The first mention (ii: 7-11) marks the governing principle of Christian behavior. The second (iii: 11-24) presents the proofs of sonship in God's family. The third (iv: 7-21) explains the origin, the energy and the steadfast confidence of this divine force. Its source is God Himself, "for God is love." This grace so highly commended by John is not of earth; it springs not from any merely human fountain, it is not native to the human heart. "We love him because he

first loved us." The parentage of our love to God is His love to us. He loves us into loving Himself and our fellowmen. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Love is the faculty by which we know Him. It leads into an acquaintance with Him, for it has eyes that see, ears that hear, a heart that feels and that answers to His love. The natural man is both blind and deaf as to the love of God; he knows nothing of it, it is foolishness to him. To the Lord's child it is a precious reality. Love casts out fear, and fills us with a blissful confidence (iv: 16-18). For the Lord Jesus and believers belong to the same family, have the same tender Father, and are heirs to the same glorious heritage. Therefore, they have no ground to dread even the awful Day of Judgment; for the children have the same standing with God as has the Elder Brother Himself.

Can this love of God be defined? Not wholly. Some things touching it, however, may be said. God's love, in general, is that mighty principle which leads Him to desire and seek the good of all His moral creatures; to impart benefits to them in every scale and degree of blessing; to recover and restore them when they have turned aside from their true end, and lost themselves through sin; to admit them to participation in His own holy, blessed life, in which He and they become one, as the Father and Son are one (Orr). Love alone explains God's marvellous dealings with

our rebellious race. When we remember the world's treatment of Him, its rejection of His authority, its idolatries, its profanities, its calumnies and its slanders against Him, we are amazed at His patience with it, His long-suffering. "The forbearance of God"—how wonderful it is! The secret of it is His love. "God is love:" not only loving, but love. We know He is righteous, but we are nowhere told He is righteousness. We know He is almighty, but we nowhere read God is power. Twice we are told, "God is love." It is His nature. This is the key to His gracious ways with the disobedient children of men. It should be noted also that Christian love is not a mere feeling, nor mood, nor sentiment, nor impulse. It is a vital principle which controls the whole life, which transforms one's habits, guides one's ways, shapes one's whole course, and leads one to rejoice in hope of the coming glory.

6. Faith the evidence of sonship, v: 1-12. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (cf. iv: 4). It is a faith that is obedient to the Lord's commands, and is victorious over the world (vers. 2-5). Love is a master-principle, is an all-conquering principle. It is one that is assured that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Deliverer; that is just as sure that He is also the Son of God. In the one case it receives the testimony that He fills the Messianic offices of Prophet, Priest and King. In the other it holds Him to be God manifest in the flesh, Himself the true God. The ground of this faith is the threefold testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood (v: 8).

The Holy Spirit is the supreme witness. "The water" probably signifies His baptism at the Jordan when the Father bore His emphatic testimony that He was well pleased in Him. "The blood" no doubt is that of the cross. He is thus declared to be both Messiah and Son of God on whom faith may confidently rest.

PRAYER AND THE CERTAINTY OF CHRISTIAN
KNOWLEDGE.

IV. Conclusion, v: 13-21.

Intercessory prayer is most precious, but it is discriminative (v: 16). For one at least no prayer is to be offered, for one who has sinned "the sin unto death." To determine with any positiveness what the "sin unto death" is, is most difficult, if not impossible. It is not an ordinary transgression into which professing Christians may fall, and often do; it must be one that is extraordinary, heinous and *mortal* in the deepest sense. It seems to be a single act that cuts the sinner off from all intercession. Some regard it as identical with the sin against the Holy Spirit, the "unpardonable sin." Others think it is not this, but something akin to it, a sin that is peculiar and fatal. "Death," the punishment of it, appears to be eternal death. If it were physical death, as many believe, the passage would be readily understood, and instances of such transgression ending in the death of the transgressors are found in Scripture, *e. g.*, 1 Cor. v: 1; xi: 30; 1 Tim. i: 20. No doubt there are even now cases of fatal sickness brought on by sins for which no prayer is available

as respects recovery. But it is doubtful whether physical death is meant. "Life" all through the epistle means eternal life; death, likewise, seems to mean in each case eternal death.

Design of First John, Chap. v: 13. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *even* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (R. V.).

"These things" embraces the whole epistle. The verse states the object of this epistle, namely, that Christians may know they have eternal life. He writes the Gospel that "ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John xx: 31). He writes the epistle "that ye may know ye have eternal life." The Gospel is designed to put us in possession of eternal life: the epistle is intended to lead us to know we have it. The one aims to bring us to a saving faith; the other to make us know our faith is saving. To have a thing and to know we have it are not always the same. We may have a thing and yet be in doubt whether we possess it. One's name may be in a will as heir to a great inheritance, and he be ignorant of the fact. We may think we have eternal life, yet deceive ourselves, cherishing feeling for faith, mistaking a wish for ownership. Many sincere Christians go through life with little or no assurance that they are saved. There are those who think it is even a kind of virtue to doubt, who look on the full assurance of salvation as a sort of presumption which genuine humility forbids one to claim. Now this epistle fur-

nishes us with infallible evidences of our state before God. It provides marks and traits whereby the believer may know assuredly that he is passed from death into life, is now named and anointed for eternal bliss. We note some of these tokens and sings of the saved condition which John so plentifully gives us in this Scripture.

I. Believing on the name of the Son of God, v: 13 (cf. John i: 12; I John iii: 23; v: 1). His name stands for Himself, for all He is and for all He promises. His great title, Son of God, at once pledges to the believer His grace and love and power to do for him up to the full measure of his need. Faith lays hold on His pledges and comforts itself with the assurance that it will all be made good to him even as the Lord has said. There is an element in saving faith of persuasion that salvation is guaranteed to the believer. Here is the testimony of one of the evangelical churches on the subject that is worthy of all acceptance: "True and saving faith . . . is a cordial reception and appropriation of him (Christ) by the sinner as his Saviour, with an accompanying persuasion or assurance corresponding to the degree or strength of his faith, that he shall be saved by him." Heb. xi: 1 confirms this testimony: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (R. V.). Whoever savingly believes on the name of the Son of God has this witness in his personal consciousness. "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

The apostle gives us many marks whereby we may know that we are children of God. These have been already noticed in this study. There are mentioned again as distinct marks of the saved state—

2. Walking in the light is proof of our state, i: 7. He who walks with God must love the company of the godly; he cannot habitually dwell with them who are the Lord's foes. In what society do we delight? Our tastes, desires, affections—what sort of company attracts and holds them? When Peter and John were released from arrest "they went to their own company." They could go to no other. They must seek their own kind. This is characteristic of all the saints; they love His family; they do not the family of the ungodly. In our deepest and truest selves, where do we live?

3. Confession of sin and pardon, i: 8-10. What is our attitude toward sin? Do we dread it? confess it? forsake it? and seek after holiness? If so, we have that much of evidence that we belong to God.

4. Obedience is a signal mark of Sonship, ii: 3. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." An obedient child in a household knows that he has the love of his father and his mother when he gladly and habitually obeys. A disobedient son is always in fear; genuine fellowship with his parents he does not have nor can so long as he seeks his own will and walks in his own ways. It is an infallible sign this of obedience.

5. Separation from the world is another proof of our Sonship, ii: 15-17. It is a marvellous, great

world we live in, and it has stupendous attractions. Its riches, its splendors, its pleasures, its refinements and its gratifications—how do these and the like affect us? Do we love it or turn from it?

6. The hope of seeing Christ and being like Him is another token of Sonship, iii: 1-4. Whoever waits and longs for Christ's coming, whoever yearns to see Him and to be like Him, whoever lives soberly and righteously and godly in this evil world, looking for that Blessed Hope, has the proof in himself that he is a child of God.

7. A life of righteousness is another evidence of Sonship, iii: 7-10. Whoever does righteousness as a habit of his soul, whoever loves righteousness and makes it the aim and the effort of his whole self, may take comfort in the assurance that he is born of God, for he that "doeth righteousness is born of him."

8. Love of the brethren is still another proof of Sonship, iii: 14. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." Brotherly love is the supreme test of our standing before God.

9. Faith is yet another evidence of Sonship, v: 4, 5. It is a victorious faith, for it overcomes the world; it is a faith that receives Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of God, Deliverer and Divine, and therefore able to redeem us from all iniquity and from all enemies, even death itself.

10. Certainty of Christian knowledge, v: 18-20. In this passage the term *know* occurs four times. It is found three times in verses 13-15; seven times in this

short section of the epistle; and more than a score of times in the letter. The apostle attaches great value to the word; it is the hinge on which turns the certainty of our salvation. It expresses the utmost assurance. "O taste and see that the Lord is gracious," sang the Psalmist long ago. "Try for yourselves and you will know, you cannot help but know." So John seems to say to his readers.

V: 18, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." We know it from the Lord's own testimony, iii: 9. Does this mean that the Christian never sins? Certainly not, for "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." He who is born of God does not practice sin, does not live in sin, he cannot. The new life he has received is holy and seeks holiness; the grace given him forbids his sinning. When he falls into sin he confesses the wrongdoing, repents of it, turns away from it, and seeks the Lord's pardon and is fully forgiven. The knowledge of this comforting truth rests on Christ's word, and on the believer's personal experience.

V: 19, "We know that we are of God." We know it by all the marks, signs, tokens and proofs so plentifully furnished in this epistle. Our state and standing, therefore, is totally different from that of the world, for "the world" lies in the wicked one. The figure is that of a child lying in the lap of its parent. In v: 18 the evil one toucheth him not who is born of God. That is, the devil cannot ever again seize hold of and rule him that is a child of God.

Here we are told that the unbelieving world lies in his embrace, rests in his lap! Nobody believes such a radical and frightful statement but a genuine Christian. This inspired apostle, however, most solemnly affirms it, and believe it we must if we are Christians.

V: 20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ." We know it by His Spirit, by His promise, and by the enlightened consciousness within us. "This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

In this brief letter there are several words and phrases that are identical with language found in John's First Epistle. Indeed, it has been pointed out that of the thirteen verses of Second John eight are found in First John. This fact goes far to prove that the author of the one writing is also the author of the other.

The writer styles himself "the Elder." The term is the same as *Presbyter*. This title describes age; no doubt he was far advanced in life when he wrote, for it is generally believed that John lived to be nearly if not quite one hundred years old, and he probably died about the close of the first Christian century. Toward the end of the century the epistle was written. It describes also a fatherly relation between him and those whom he so tenderly addresses, and his official position. He was "the Elder," as was Peter likewise (1 Peter v: 1). Hence John speaks both with paternal affection and apostolic authority.

The epistle is addressed "unto the elect lady and her children," which does not mean the whole church, nor any single congregation of Christians, but an individual woman in whose family were children. Who she was can not be determined with any certainty. It has been conjectured that her name was *Electa*, but

the use of the same word in ver. 13 seems to forbid it. "The elect sister" of that verse cannot be a proper name. With more probability it is thought that the term for "lady" is to be understood as a proper name, and that we should translate as follows: "To the elect Kyria." Kyria was in use as the name of a woman in those ancient times, and there is no impropriety in so understanding it here. At any rate, she was a person of note and of influence. She was training her household in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the aged apostle attests her faithfulness and her success; he found her children walking in the truth, and it rejoiced his heart.

He writes, (1) to exhort the Lady (Kyria) to steadfastness in love and obedience (vers. 5, 6). The phrase "love one another" is characteristic of John (1 John iii: 11), as is also love to God (1 John iv: 21). This is no new commandment, but one had from the beginning. He defines more exactly what he means by love—"And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments." Walk denotes the daily life. It includes the temper of mind and the external deportment which go to make up character. The Christian walk is to be the constant exercise of love, obedience, steadfastness and patience.

He writes (2), to warn her against false teachers and false doctrine (vers. 7, 8). Many deceivers were abroad, men who rejected the blessed hope of the Lord's coming in visible glory and power. In 1 John iv: 3 the apostle brands every "spirit" that rejects the great truth of the incarnation ("Jesus Christ is come

in the flesh") as Antichrist. Here in 2 John the solemn charge is that whoever does "not confess that Christ cometh in the flesh is a deceiver and an antichrist." The great adversary, Antichrist, when he shall appear, will be both—a false Christ, a mock Messiah—but also a malignant and determined foe of Christ. He who denies the coming of the Lord is a deceiver of himself and of the people who heed his teaching, but he is likewise a foe of Christ and himself a false Christ.

The false teachers are further described in ver. 9: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God." They are those who forsake the old paths, who go beyond what the Lord has taught, who give up much of the Gospel, or who declare that it is no longer adapted to "the modern man." They are the advanced thinkers, the inventors of novelties, the patrons of the spirits of the age. There is a vast crop of them on earth now.

(3) Warning against a false charity, vers. 10, 11. Some might be disposed to say, "Well, if love is so noble and ennobling, let us love all and fellowship all without distinction or discrimination." No, John replies; you cannot afford to fellowship those who propagate error that is destructive, for if you do you thereby become sharers in their evil works. Separation from the ungodly and repudiation of all teachers of bad doctrine is John's earnest counsel.

THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

This letter is addressed to the "well-beloved Gaius," one of the most common names in the Roman Empire in those ancient days. Four with this name of Gaius are mentioned in the New Testament—Gaius of Macedonia (Acts xix: 29); Gaius of Corinth, with whom Paul was lodging when he wrote the epistle to the Romans (Rom. xvi: 23); Gaius of Derbe (Acts xx: 4); and this Gaius whom it so highly commends. Whether he was the same as any one of the three mentioned above is unknown. The following matters in the epistle are worthy of careful study:

(1) The joy of apostles and ministers over the fidelity and the steadfastness of their converts in walking in the truth (vers. 2-4). It hurts, it wounds us deeply when those whom we have tried to lead into the saving acquaintance with Christ go back and walk no more with us.

(2) Hospitality praised (vers. 5-8). Gaius had shown his love and generosity in the entertainment which he extended to those who were laboring in the cause of missions and in the noble help he gave them. The missionaries were thoroughly unselfish and self-sacrificing in their good work—"For the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." All the greater, therefore, was the need that Christian brethren should support them. Gaius was

one of the most conspicuous of those who did so. It was a "faithful work toward them that are brethren and strangers withal" which he did, and it was prompted solely by love. The aged John commends him in the highest terms and sets the seal of divine approval on his loving hospitality.

(3) Denunciation of hierarchical arrogance and ecclesiastical despotism (vers. 9, 10). Diotrephes acted in a very different spirit. He loved pre-eminence in the church, grasped after authority, set himself against the apostle himself and treated him with insolence and indignity, refused to receive the missionaries, and prohibited others from doing so. His conduct is denounced, his behavior held up as a warning to all, and John deals with him according to his deserts. How hateful to the inspired writers is ecclesiastical tyranny, the arrogant claim of lordship over God's heritage!

(4) A good man cordially commended (vers. 11, 12). "Demetrius hath good report of all, and of the truth itself." The witness borne to his goodness was that of his fellow-Christians. "He that doeth good is of God." Demetrius belongs to this select class. "He that doeth evil hath not seen God." Diotrephes must be put into this unhappy class. "Imitate not that which is evil," Diotrephes and his company, "but that which is good," Demetrius and his fellow-saints.

These two short epistles give us some insight into the membership and conditions of the primitive church. Christians then had their weaknesses and their imperfections even as we; they had also those

who were noble and true, but likewise some ignoble and unworthy members. Some were generous and self-sacrificing in the highest degree, others were ambitious and self-seeking. But brotherly love was the prevailing feature among the majority. It is noteworthy that individual Christians are singled out and commended or condemned, for ecclesiasticism had not then hardened into an organism in which the individual was swallowed up, the huge body being everything.

EPISTLE OF JUDE

The writer of this short epistle calls himself Jude, or Judas. His name was a very common one among the Jews: there was hardly another of more frequent use. Two among the apostles bore it, viz: Judas, mentioned in John xiv: 22; cf. Luke vi: 16, and Judas Iscariot. Jude describes himself as "the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." The James here mentioned is no doubt the same called "the Lord's brother" (Gal. i: 19), the writer of the epistle which bears his name. Neither was an apostle. Both belonged to the family of Joseph, and both are called the Lord's brethren. In Mark vi: 3 the sons in Joseph's family are James, Joses, Judas and Simon. Sisters there were also, but they are not named nor their number given. The appellation "servant of Jesus Christ," Alford affirms, "is never thus barely used in an address of an epistle to designate an apostle." Phil. i: 1 has a similar expression, "Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ," "but the designation common to two persons necessarily sinks to the rank of the inferior one. In every other case servant is associated with apostle." It is noteworthy that neither James nor Jude hint at their relationship with Jesus; their unaffected humility will not suffer them to do so. Jude speaks of his being the "brother of James" perhaps to give authority and weight to his

letter, for James was far more distinguished and influential than he.

Both Jude and James pertained to the family of David. An early historian, Hegesippus (c. A. D. 175-190), records that two of Jude's grandsons were brought before the Roman Emperor Domitian toward the close of the first century and were questioned by him as to their connection with the house of David. They told the Emperor that they were of David's family, which obviously identifies the household of Joseph and Mary with the royal house of Israel's greatest king. Domitian asked them about their wealth. They said they had some money—9,000 denaries, some \$1,500—they had also 39 acres of land which they tilled themselves, and as proof of their toil they showed the august ruler their rough and hardened hands. The Roman asked them about Christ and His Kingdom, of what nature it would be and when it would appear, and the two men replied that it would not be of this world nor earthly, but heavenly and angelic, and that it would appear at the end of the age, at which time He will come in glory and judge the living and the dead, and will give to each one according to his works. The Emperor dismissed them, despising them as poor men without influence and without power. The two brothers afterward became leaders in the church because they had stood before the Emperor as witnesses, and because they were of the family of the Lord. "This Hegesippus relates" (Eusebius).

This interesting story takes us back into the first

century, about the year A. D. 90, while the Apostle John was still living, and Jude their grandfather had passed away perhaps less than twenty-five years before. Two facts of great importance are established by this narrative: First, that the family of Joseph and Mary was identified with the royal house of David; no one raised a question touching the reality of such relation. Second, that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ was in the minds of Christians generally and in the minds even of the rulers of the Empire closely associated with the throne of David.

The address of the epistle is remarkable for the affection Jude expresses for these saints. He speaks of them as "called," "beloved in God the Father," "kept for Jesus Christ" (R. V.). He wishes mercy, peace and love may be multiplied to them—a prayer without a parallel in any other epistle of the New Testament. They must have been a worthy band, a noble and trustworthy company of believers, to merit such an address.

The design of the epistle is indicated very distinctly in ver. 3: "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." Jude in these words clearly intimates that he had meditated writing at length on the common salvation, perhaps an essay or a treatise; but the solemn and urgent necessity pressed upon his heart that he must warn Christians of the dangers that threatened the truth, and to protest against the evils

and the evildoers that had invaded the brotherhood. The faith was in jeopardy, nay, Christianity itself. Every loyal soul must bestir himself to the uttermost. To falter in the presence of such tremendous perils as Jude describes would be cowardly, would be treason to Christ. And so Jude urges each believer to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

Peter vigorously denounces the like evils, but he speaks of them as undeveloped, not yet fullgrown, but sure to reach a fatal maturity (2 Peter ii, iii). Jude represents them as actually present and as doing incalculable injury. Peter sees them as an invading army, the advanced guard as already on the ground with the main body in sight. Jude speaks of them as enemies who are already within the sacred camp and doing their ruinous work in all parts of it. Peter predicts the advent of these foes of truth in the following terms: "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter iii: 3, 4). Jude appears to quote this prediction and to affirm that it has its fulfilment in his day: "But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: that they said unto you, In the last times there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts" (vers. 17, 18). There is an almost exact parallel between the two

writers, Peter and Jude, in the two passages. The differences between them, slight as they are, may be accounted for by Jude's use of the plural apostles, thus glancing perhaps at the like words of Paul in 1 Tim. iv: 1; 2 Tim. iii: 1ff. There seems to be indicated here that the predictions both of Peter and of Paul are older than this epistle of Jude, and that Jude was acquainted with both and had them in mind when he wrote. If this be admitted, the inference is both legitimate and conclusive that Second Peter was in existence when Jude wrote, and that he received it as the word of God, a true prophecy touching the Last Times. It must be borne in mind, however, that the prophecies of neither Peter nor Jude are to be tied up to the times when they lived and wrote, nor are their writings to be regarded as dealing exclusively with the evils then existent. They do indeed apply to prevailing conditions then, but both writings pertain to the church in all its history. Whenever like conditions prevail these two epistles bear their solemn and urgent testimony with the same force as they did when first written. They belong to the age in which we now live; they will find their full accomplishment in the Last Days when wickedness will be at the flood.

Jude begins with the statement that the saints are "preserved in Jesus Christ." He ends with their presentation as "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." The two statements disclose the theme of the epistle, viz.: the preservation and presentation of the saints. They are "preserved," and they shall be "presented without blemish" before

God's glorious presence. There can be no presentation of them in glory unless they are safely guarded by God's grace and power. For, as already indicated, the epistle contemplates a perilous situation; it deals with a time when the professing body is filled with men of the loosest morals, of the most flagrant life, and when destructive doctrines are taught and the wildest errors are disseminated. Against these corruptors and skeptics Jude writes with a vehemence that in the New Testament is without parallel. His denunciations are terrific. The character and doom he assigns to them are appalling. Matters have come to a dreadful pass when the Spirit of God is compelled to use such stern and awful language. Let us note what he says of them. The character given them is as bad and black as it can well be.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APOSTATES.

I. They are surreptitious foes. "For there are certain men crept in unawares—ungodly men" (ver. 4). The language points to their stealthy and insidious entrance into the Christian Brotherhood. Like a serpent, like a cunning beast of prey, these ungodly men creep into the company of the godly. Peter represents them as "false teachers who privily shall bring in damnable (destructive) heresies" (2 Peter ii: 1). Paul also employs very similar terms as to the false teachers among the Galatians—"false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty" (Gal. ii: 4). In every case they are men who

are within the Christian church as enemies who feign to be friends, therefore in reality spies and traitors.

2. They are perverters of grace and deniers of Christ—"turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 4). They are those who by a vile perversity turn the liberty and the grace of the Gospel into a means of gratifying their base and unholy passions, and who thereby, both in doctrine and life, deny their Master and Lord.

3. They are censorious and arrogant detractors: "Dreamers who despise dominion and speak evil of dignities" (ver. 8). Destitute of true reverence, they rail at the holiest and the best things, and pronounce judgment on all authority and all rule. Defiant like Pharaoh, they say, "Who is the Lord that I should hearken to his voice?" (Ex. v: 2). They have the proud tongue of the lawless: "Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Psalms xii: 4).

4. Ignorant calumniators they are, and brutish sensualists; "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (ver. 10). What they do not know nor understand, as something lofty and noble, they deride and denounce; what they know is that which ministers to their disordered appetites and their debased tastes.

5. They are hypocrites and deceivers, whose lives are fruitless, and whose presence among Christians is contaminating (vers. 12, 13): "These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast

with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever" (R. V.). This is terrific but most graphic language. The imagery is most vivid; one can see these insincere, depraved professors as if they stood before him in flesh and blood. Their character and their wicked behavior are made visible; like sunken reefs they wreck the noblest and purest lives; like clouds that promise much but forever disappoint; like trees with withered fruit, leafless, dead and unprotected; like the raging sea, they cast out only their acts of shame; like meteors that stray through the sky at random and without law, and go out at last into a night that knows no morning—such their character and doom.

6. They are grumblers, faultfinders, pleasure-seekers, boasters, parasites: "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (ver. 16). They find fault with the authority of every sort, human and divine; they are dissatisfied with their lot, with circumstances, with Providence; they boast that they could manage things better themselves; and yet they can be servile, sycophantic when thereby advantage is secured.

7. They are schismatics and sensualists: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (ver. 19).

Such is the forbidding portrait which Jude draws of the ungodly. But he adds other traits and features which must be noted if we are to have a complete conception of the situation. He furnishes a number of examples of apostates and of apostasy which disclose even more strikingly the spirit and end of them that pervert and corrupt the truth, that deny the Lord Jesus Christ, and that mock at the things of God. These are marks of a fatal degeneracy, tokens of the "falling away" which prepares the way for the revelation of the man of sin and son of perdition whose destruction Christ Himself accomplishes at His coming (2 Thess. ii). To these seven marks we now turn.

(1) *Unbelief*. "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not" (ver. 5). Unbelieving Israel, though redeemed from bondage by almighty power, afterward fell beneath the judgment of God. By their distrust and disobedience they provoked the Lord to anger, so that He swore in His wrath, They shall not enter into my rest (Heb. iii: 11; cf. Psalm xcv: 11). Unbelief is deadly. Luther said strongly but not too strongly, "Nothing damns but unbelief." Let the saints remember the mournful example of faithless Israel, and hold fast their trust in the living God. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God" (Heb. iii: 12).

(2) *Pride*. "And the angels which kept not their

first estate (their own principality), but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto judgment of the great day" (ver. 6). The fall of the angels is involved in profound mystery. Peter seems to teach that they fell when they were still dwelling in heaven: "For if God spared not the angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness"—They were cast down because they sinned even in His glorious presence (2 Peter ii: 4). Jude alludes to the same fact in the expression, "Kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation," *i. e.*, they deliberately apostated from the blessed state and place in which they had been placed by creative power. They were once innocent, but they sinned against God and were expelled from their habitation. Paul teaches that it was through pride Satan fell under condemnation (1 Tim. iii: 6). Pride, ambition, rebellion, and then expulsion from the lofty habitation—this appears to be the brief history of the angelic apostasy. They are now felon outcasts with a doom far more terrible awaiting them in the future.

Serious error is sometimes taught concerning the fall of the angels. The cause of it, we are told, was their sin with women, and Gen. vi: 2, 4 is cited in proof—"The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." Jude 7 is supposed to lend support to this view: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange

flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Against this application of the two passages in Genesis and Jude very strong and conclusive objections may be urged. (a) "Sons of God" may mean angels; the expression probably does in Job i: 6; xxxviii: 7. But in every instance where it is thus used it designates good angels, unfallen beings. Even in Job i: 6 Satan is carefully distinguished from the "sons of God;" he is not identified with them, he only appears "among them." Not once in all the Bible are Satan and his hosts called "sons of God" (cf. 2 Cor. iv: 4; Eph. ii: 2; vi: 12; Rev. xii: 9; xx: 2, etc.). The Devil is always the Devil, and so are demons always demons; they are not named "sons of God." If therefore these "sons of God" represent unfallen angels, they could not be guilty of such a crime as is alleged; if demons are meant by the title, they could not possibly be called God's sons. (b) If the good angels are meant, they could not marry women of our race and have offspring by them, for these angels are sexless according to Jesus' teaching: "But Jesus answered and said unto them (Sadducees), Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven" (Matt. xxii: 29, 30). Like the angels the "sons of the resurrection" are immortal, they are forever free from the limitations and passions of the earthly life, and are like the angels, in that procreation and family relationships have forever ended. (c) If fallen angels are meant, then we are confronted with

this immense difficulty: Demons are spirits; how could such beings take women of our race as wives, and how could they have offspring by them? It may be alleged that they assumed human bodies and so could become husbands of the daughters of men. But there is no hint in Scripture that they have ever done so. In fact, they are never represented as appearing in human bodies. Demoniacal possession is a very different thing; in it there is no assumption of a body at all. Demons seek to enter bodies, even those of animals (Luke viii: 32), but they never become incarnate. Besides, to do this would require a miracle such as evil spirits could by no possibility work. God alone could effect so mighty a transformation. But is it conceivable that the Holy One who cannot connive at sin would lend His power to effect so vile a deed? (d) The children of these unholy alliances are called *men* (Gen. vi: 4). They are likewise called Giants, but the Giants in Scripture are kings, rulers, warriors (Num. xiii: 33; Deut. ii: 10, 11, 21; iii: 11). If they had been the offspring of demons and women, they would have been neither the one nor the other, but an unnatural grotesque mixture of the two—monsters, like the fabled Centaur and Cecrops of Greek Mythology. (e) The statement in Jude 6, 7 does not necessarily require that the sin of the angels was the same as that of Sodom, but only that in both cases, that of the angels and this of Sodom, there was apostasy from God and deserved punishment on account of it. (f) "Sons of God" denotes, as a phrase, not the angels at all, but the pious Sethites, while the

“daughters of men” are the descendants of wicked Cain. Alliance between these two distinct bodies, the religious and the irreligious, the people of God and the people of the world, leads inevitably to degeneracy and moral corruption, and ultimately to apostasy. This is precisely Jude’s theme, the peril against which he so urgently warns. God’s servants were called in the Old Testament times “sons of God” (cf. Hos. i: 10).

(3) *Lust*. “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire” (ver. 7). These two infamous places give the name to an infamous crime. So infectious and so widespread was the moral taint of Sodom that Lot’s family, in spite of his righteous testimony against it, was smitten with it and his daughters became the authors of one of the blackest deeds recorded in the Old Testament.

(4) *Vituperation*, vers. 8-10. “Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities,” etc. Michael the Archangel is adduced as a witness against these calumniators. In his contention with the devil Michael durst not bring a railing accusation against him; he only said, The Lord rebuke thee. By reason of his exalted dignity he might have denounced the slanderer in the sternest language. For he is “the archangel,” a title that denotes the highest angelic rank. Only in one other place in the Bible is this great name, archangel, found, 1 Thess. iv: 16. It occurs in the singular num-

ber, never in the plural, whence the inference is drawn that there is but one such angel. In Daniel x: 13 he is called "one of the chief princes," and in ver. 21 of the same chapter "Michael your prince," as if he stood in some intimate and peculiar relation to Israel. In Rev. xii: 7-9 he is described as the leader of the heavenly host against the Dragon and his army. All this indicates the illustrious station he holds. And yet, great as Michael is, he durst not bring a railing of judgment against the devil. Why "durst not?" Because even the loftiest angel cannot pass final judgment on even such an accuser as the devil. What an example he is to men in the proper use of speech and in the government of the tongue!

The altercation was about the "body of Moses." The reference is mysterious. Just what is meant, or to what Jude alludes, it is by no means easy to determine. It is unlikely that it is the same contention mentioned in Zech. iii: 1f—the dispute as to Joshua the high priest, for the differences between that and this are quite marked. Nor was it about Moses' burying-place, for the Hebrews were never guilty of ancestral worship, nor of devotions at the tombs of their illustrious dead. That idolatrous custom lies at the door of Gentiles. Nor was it a dispute as to whether Moses' body should have a burial at all. For the record tells us that "he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. xxxiv: 6). Neither angel nor demon could challenge such authority as this. The Lord superintended the sepulture of His servant.

We believe that Jude refers to Moses' resurrection from the dead. Together with the prophet Elijah, Moses appeared "in glory" at the Lord's Transfiguration, and the two heavenly visitants talked with Jesus of His decease He was shortly to accomplish at Jerusalem. The two were living men, *visible*, for they appeared; *audible*, for they were speaking with Him; *recognizable*, for they appeared in glory—language which plainly indicates that the two had bodily forms. Elijah certainly had his body, for he had never passed through the gates of death. Moses had died, but God closed his eyes and hid his body from mortal sight and kept it safe till he should appear in the glorious scene on the Mount. It is our belief that it was then Moses was raised up from the grave. It may have been that the devil resisted his resurrection, and that he sought to prevent it, while Michael, the prince who stands for Israel, vindicated the Lord's dealing with Moses and besought Him to rebuke the accuser. "These dreamers" speak evil of those things which they know not; Michael knows, yet tempers speech with a wise caution. A notable example of self-control.

(5) *Hatred*. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain." He was the first murderer, a wretched fratricide. John says, Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother because his works were evil, and his brother's righteousness (1 John iii: 12). Hate lies hard by railing, vituperation. Accordingly, a malignancy that is murderous reigns in the hearts of these apostates. If they offer sacrifice, it is that of

Cain; if a saint nearby them is righteous and worships acceptably, they are ready to murder him in their deadly jealousy and hate.

(6) *Greed.* "And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward." Three times in the New Testament is Balaam mentioned, and in each case with unsparing condemnation. Peter speaks of him as one who "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter ii: 15). John charges him with having "taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" (Rev. ii: 14). And Jude says he "ran greedily after reward," his chief error. Balak's gold had an irresistible attraction for him, and have it he would even if the angel of the Lord should bar his way with drawn sword. He is an instance of light resisted, conscience perverted, of crime added to crime. What a picture all this furnishes of the temper and the spirit of the apostates!

(7) *Rebellion.* "Perished in the gainsaying of Korah" (vers. 11). The rebellion of Korah and his company is recorded in Num. xvi. His gainsaying was his denial and repudiation of the leadership of Moses and Aaron and rebellion against their authority. But this was rebellion against God who had appointed these two men to their high office, and accordingly the Lord Himself dealt directly with the rebels: earth, like an enraged animal, swallowed them alive, a most uncommon punishment. Likewise the apostates of Jude's epistle despise dominions, scoff at constituted authority, and would exalt themselves into the seats of dignity and power.

Such is the dreadful picture which the inspired pen of Jude draws of the ungodly and the apostate. It is not surprising that he employs the sternest words about them, words that fairly burn in their intensity of abhorrence: "These are they who are hidden rocks in your lovefeasts"—rocks on which the church is in danger of shipwreck and destruction: "shepherds" who devour the flock; waterless clouds, whirled about by fierce winds; fruitless trees, uprooted trees; wild waves of the sea which cast up only mire and dirt—their own shame; lawless meteors that dart through the sky, then go out into a darkness which shall never know any light.

Jude pronounces their doom in the words of Enoch, "the seventh from Adam": "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." It is generally believed by modern interpreters that this prophecy of Enoch is quoted by Jude from the apocryphal book of Enoch, part of which was written before the Christian era and part of it after that time. Granting such quotation, that fact does not warrant us to affirm that Jude endorsed the book. Paul cites from three Greek poets: from Aratus (Acts xvii: 28); from Meander (1 Cor. xv: 33); and from Epimenides (Tit. i: 12). Does anyone imagine that Paul endorses all these poets wrote? So Jude cites a passage from a non-canonical book not because he accepts it as

Scripture, but because this particular prediction found in it is from God and therefore true. In like manner Paul quotes a verse from Epimenedes and adds, "This testimony is true (Tit. i: 13), but no one would be so foolish as to conclude that Paul means the whole poem is true. Whence the writer of the book of Enoch derived the prediction is unknown. It may have been preserved as a tradition and faithfully transmitted from generation to generation, or in some other way preserved. But no one who accepts the Bible as the word of God doubts its genuineness and truthfulness any more than he doubts Paul's quotation from the Lord Jesus in Acts xx: 35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," though whence he derived the precious saying is utterly unknown.

The depraved men of whom Jude writes were found in the professing body. They called themselves Christians, no doubt, and they sought to be recognized as such by the children of God. But in this short epistle the Spirit God brands them as enemies and apostates. "No prophecy is of private interpretation" (2 Peter i: 20). That is to say, the prophecies of the Bible do not originate with the prophets, nor are they to be tied up to their times and conditions, nor are they exhausted with themselves and their contemporaries. A prediction may be occasioned by conditions existing at the time of the prophet, but it is not necessarily limited to his day and his circumstances. Often indeed it starts from a point near the prophet himself, but its ultimate and complete fulfilment may be in the distant future, the time of the End and the

Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It can scarcely be doubted but that this is the characteristic phase of Jude's prophecy. Enoch's prediction makes it certain. No doubt the conditions of his day were as he so graphically describes them. But his message must not be confined to these. Jude deals with the final apostasy from the faith of Christ, of which Paul likewise speaks in 2 Thess. ii: 3: "It will not be except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Peter also bears witness to the same awful fact: "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The "last days" obviously point to the time of the End, the final consummation when our Lord shall return in majesty and great glory to judge the earth in righteousness.

The time of the "falling away" will be one of dreadful wickedness, of unbridled lawlessness, of the sway of the worst passions of our fallen humanity, and of colossal crimes. So both Peter and Jude picture it; so does Paul, and so do John in the Revelation and Daniel in his prophecies. Every thoughtful, believing man who sees with clear vision the evil principles now at work in human society, and who reads prophetic Scripture with the open eye and mind, must feel profoundly that the "falling away" is near at hand if indeed it has not already set in. The tendencies of the times indicate a breaking away from the

authority of the Bible and a change of attitude as to truth for which the Christian Church has stood during the centuries of its witness-bearing. The outcome of these tendencies Scripture leaves us in no doubt about—revolt against the authority of God, the manifestation of the Man of Sin, and the Advent of Jesus Christ for judgment and the establishment of His own glorious Kingdom. It should be the supreme duty of every believer in Christ to heed faithfully the exhortation of Jude to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.”

STUDIES

IN THE

Book of Revelation

“Other men laboured, and ye are entered into
their labours”

✓
BY

WILLIAM G. MOOREHEAD, D.D., LL.D.

Professor in Xenia Theological Seminary

NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON

AND

EDINBURGH

COPYRIGHTED, 1908

BY

THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF
PUBLICATION

PITTSBURGH, PA.

PREFACE

This little book is not a commentary on the Revelation; it does not aspire to such a dignity. It is designed to be just what its title announces—studies in the Revelation. For years the writer has deeply felt the lack of a satisfactory analysis of this book and a reasonable and helpful solution of its mysterious and marvellous structure. Reading it, as he has done, through a rather long life, he confesses he saw little or no connection between the various parts, he understood nothing scarcely of the articulation of its Visions, nor saw any definite, far-reaching plan running through it and binding its strange members into a harmonious and majestic unity. The studies of some months past, rather years, have served to open much of what for long was almost sealed and to pour light into many a dark place. The chief aim of this Study is to help the reader and student of the Apocalypse into an apprehension of the plan and the design of this great Scripture. Whether the writer

has achieved this aim or not must be left to others to judge.

All available books have been freely used, some of which have proved very serviceable. Grateful acknowledgment is here made of the clear suggestions and wise criticisms of a personal friend, Dr. W. J. Erdman.

WILLIAM G. MOOREHEAD.

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THE REVELATION

CHAPTER I.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE.

The study of this great prophecy is entered upon with much diffidence; almost with hesitation. Many regard it as so abstruse and obscure that any satisfactory interpretation of it is extremely difficult, if not hopeless. Only great scholars and lifelong students of the Bible are competent, it is thought, to deal with its profound mysteries, and even these are often baffled by its symbolism, and defeated by its depths. Others should not attempt its elucidation. Such is the feeling of many.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, its study is imposed on all Christians. It is a part of the word of God. It bears the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its august title is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him to show unto his servants." It is an Apocalypse, an unveiling of what could not be otherwise known. It is for the instruction, guidance, and comfort of God's people.

The prophet Daniel was bidden to "shut up the vision," to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even

to the time of the end" (Dan. viii: 26; xii: 4, 9). But our Lord's command to John is: "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches," i: 11. The instruction of the revealing angel to the Seer when he is bringing the mighty visions of the prophecy to an end is, "Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand," xxii: 10. Explicitly the Saviour declares, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches," xxii: 16. The Revelation, therefore, is for the whole people of God; to them it is an unsealed book, and it is intended to be their teacher and their guide in things that very vitally concern them.

Furthermore, a special blessing is promised to him who reads and to them who "hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein," i: 3. The public reading of the book in the assemblies of Christians is here recognized, which places it on the same plane with the other books of Scripture. Its Divine Author is thus at pains to exalt its importance, to commend its teachings, and to promise a rich reward for its study. Among the last words in the Bible is this gracious encouragement to the diligent student of the Apocalypse: "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book," xxii: 7. To keep these words one must know them; to know them one must ponder them, and fill his mind with their deep teachings. They make a grievous mistake who look on the book as enigmatical, incomprehensible; or

who, if granting it may be in measure understood, stigmatize it as impractical and profitless; as having little, if any, bearing on the believer's life. Let us turn to the book.

I. Who was its penman? Four times he calls himself John, i: 1, 4, 9; xxii: 8. There is no description of him beyond his name, no word is there to indicate what John it was to whom the writing of the Apocalypse was committed. But it is not difficult to identify him. There is but one John to whom we would naturally suppose the Lord would entrust such a work, the John so intimately associated with Him during His earthly ministry, the "Beloved Disciple," the near friend of Jesus; John the apostle. There is scarcely any doubt but that the writer was this John, or one who sought to pass for him. We may at once put aside the notion of fraud or imposture. The spirit of holiness and truth which pervades every page of the book is incomparable with the spirit of falsehood. The internal evidence overwhelmingly supports this view. That a forger should write such a book as this is simply incredible.

Moreover, the unanimous testimony of the Christian Church of the second century by its chief teachers strengthens this conclusion. But few witnesses need here be introduced. Justin Martyr (c. A. D. 150) expressly affirms that John, "one of the apostles of Christ," was the writer of the Revelation. Justin was probably born within a few years of John's death, or even while John was living, and he bore this witness within fifty years of John's demise. It is not likely Justin could be mis-

taken touching so vital a matter, nor that the source of his information was not thoroughly trustworthy. Irenaeus (c. 180) apparently never heard of any other than John the apostle as the writer. Irenaeus' testimony is of the utmost value, for he was "the grand-pupil of John," as Dr. Whedon describes him; he was the disciple of Polycarp, and Polycarp was the disciple of John, so that between John and Irenaeus there stands but one, the sainted Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna and martyr of Christ, and intimate companion of John himself. The Muratori Canon (c. A. D. 170), Melito of Sardis (c. A. D. 180), Tertullian the great Latin Father, and many others bear the like witness to the genuineness of the Apocalypse. If credence is to be put in the unanimous testimony of antiquity, if historical evidence is worth anything in deciding a historical date and the authorship of a book, it seems to be decided by unimpeachable witnesses that the apostle John was the writer of this book.

But why does John suppress his name in the Gospel and in the epistles and record it here? Because the Revelation is pre-eminently prophecy, and every prophetic writing is authenticated by the name of the prophet. The prophets of the Old Testament invariably attach their names to their books, because their names are a guarantee of their predictions. John opens the Apocalypse with the announcement of his own name, and of the source and aim of his prophecies, precisely as do the Old Testament prophets.

II. The date of the book is a matter of almost bitter controversy. Two widely differing dates compete

for the mastery. Each characterizes a school of interpreters, and each is advocated and defended with great zeal, and in some instances with violence. These dates are, respectively, A. D. 68, and A. D. 95-6. The first affirms that the book was written when Galba was Emperor of Rome, the other when Domitian was reigning. The adoption of either of these dates determines almost exclusively one's interpretation of the book. If the earlier is accepted as true, then one of necessity must accept what is commonly known as the preterist interpretation, namely, that the predictions contained herein had, and were expected to have their fulfilment in John's own time, that chaps i-xix, particularly, relate to the persecutions of Nero, the fall of Jerusalem, the dismemberment of the Jewish nation and the dispersion of Israel among the nations of the world. If the second date is assumed to be the correct one, then the Revelation has little or nothing to do with the events referred to, for it lies this side of them by a quarter of a century.

A. D. 68 is advocated by many writers of great learning and keen, critical acumen. Historical evidence for it there is none till centuries after the book was written. The first writer to mention an early date is Epiphanius, about A. D. 365, but his statement is of no value, for he says that John wrote the Apocalypse in the reign of the emperor Claudius, *i. e.*, about A. D. 50-54, and he makes the incredible assertion that at the time John was ninety years old, whereas, in point of fact he could hardly have been above fifty. If Epiphanius had named Domitian as

the emperor, he would have been in exact accord with Irenaeus, who affirms that it was written near the close of Domitian's reign, *i. e.*, A. D. 90-96, at which time the apostle would be about ninety. Some even suppose that Domitian and not Claudius is meant, but the blunderer, as Epiphanius is known to be, twice wrote the wrong name. He is the only witness for an early date among the primitive writers, and his testimony is a huge mistake.

A. D. 68 rests almost exclusively on internal evidence. Language and style are pressed into its support. Dionysius of Alexandria (3d cent.), argued from these, that he who wrote the Fourth Gospel and 1 John did not write the Revelation, for the language and style employed in the latter forbid the belief that its author also wrote the other books ascribed to John. Dionysius has been followed by multitudes since, whose main argument is, John may have written Revelation, but if he did it was early in his life, when he did not know Greek as he came to know it when an older man; and so he may have written this book at 68 A. D., and the Gospel about A. D. 80-90. We may dismiss the point without further remark.

Chap. xi: 1, 2, 8, seems to affirm that Jerusalem was standing and the Temple was still existing when the book was written. But it may as conclusively be affirmed that it is Jerusalem rebuilt and reinhabited by Hebrews, as that the Beast and the two witnesses of the same chapter have never yet appeared in history. Whedon well says, "The use of Jerusalem and temple and tribes as apocalyptic symbols no more

proves the literal existence of the city than the description of Babylon proves that that great capital then existed in all its power and glory." The advocacy of this early date mainly arises out of the interpretation of the book. All who hold it teach that these prophecies relate to events near John's own time, that they sprang from the conditions then existing, and are addressed to his contemporaries. Accordingly, the interpretation governs the date, and then the date is made to rule the interpretation, a vicious method which has no real worth. It is believed that Nero was "The Beast," that he did not die by his own hand, but that he was almost fatally wounded, but was hidden by friends, that he concealed himself in Parthia, his "deadly wound" being healed, and that in due time he would reappear at the head of a great army, destroy Rome, annihilate Christianity, deliver Israel from all foes, glorify Jerusalem, and become the Antichrist, the mock Messiah. Such was the vague rumor floating about over the empire about A. D. 68, and John accepted it, and wrote the Apocalypse with this hypothesis dominating him. The seven heads on the Beast are explained to signify Roman Emperors, viz.: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, the "five fallen" (xvii: 10); the sixth is Galba ("the one is"), and the seventh, Galba's successor, was to be Nero restored, the Man of Sin, the Antichrist. Such is the rationalistic view of Revelation, and it is supported by its advocates by vast research and acute reasoning.

Now, if the Apocalypse was actually based on the

foundation just described, then, in less than ten years historical events and facts proved the book to be totally mistaken, false, and untrustworthy. For Nero did not reappear, the seventh head of the Beast did not become Antichrist, Rome did not fall; instead, Jerusalem did, and Israel, instead of being delivered and exalted, went into an exile that still endures. Could any book, specially one claiming to be a revelation from God, survive such an overwhelming defeat—such utter bankruptcy of its essential contents? Yet the book lived, and has continued to live to this day. We may dismiss both the hypothesis and the date from further consideration. Unhesitatingly we accept Irenaeus' date, viz.: near the close of Domitian's reign, A. D. 90-96. Many whose judgment on this point is of the highest worth accept, in part, or wholly, this date, *e. g.*, Ramsay, Orr, Harnack, Swete. "Critical opinion appears to be steadily returning to the traditional date," *i. e.*, 90-96 (Purves).

CHAPTER II.

SYMBOLISM.

III. Symbolism. Every reader is impressed with the extraordinary imagery of the book. Other prophetic Scripture exhibits the same peculiarity, as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, even the Pentateuch has it in some degree. But this is a book of symbols; a series of gorgeous pictures which begin with the opening chapter and continue to the end. A marvellous profusion of this pictorial representation characterizes it. Some of the symbols are easily understood, for their meaning shines through the drapery that covers the great thought, but others are so complex, so unearthly, and portentous in their vastness and mysteriousness as to daze, overwhelm us. But let us be persuaded of this, that whether we can read the enigma, the deep idea hidden in the symbol or not, the idea is there all the same, and it is the supreme duty of the expositor to toil on at it till he uncover its meaning, at least partially. Let some features of the symbolism be noted:

(a) The imagery is taken from the Old Testament. In chap. i, the dress and posture of the glorified Son of Man, the candlesticks amid which He walks, are from the Temple, from Israel's high priest, and from the candlestick of the sanctuary. The four living creatures of chap. iv are taken from the Pentateuch

and Ezekiel. The Beast of chap. xiii is already in Daniel vii. The harvest of xiv: 14-16, and the vintage of xiv: 17-20 are in Joel iii, and in Zech. xiv, while the last worldwide conflict, xix, is described in Dan. vii, xi, xii; in Zeph., in Joel, Zech. and Matt. xxiv. We might go on to see that the Revelation, as a whole, is bound up with the earlier prophetic Scriptures by the closest and most intimate ties. Indeed, as one studies this relation of the two Testaments to each other in type, symbol, language, thoughts and expressions, he is profoundly struck with the unity of the Bible, and particularly with the oneness of the great prophetic themes of the holy word.

John lays all Scripture under tribute, and draws from it much, if not all his material. Numbers furnished by another may serve to make this plain. Revelation consists of 404 verses, of which 265 verses contain O. T. language, while there are 550 references to it (Prof. Swete gives 278 verses). The Greek texts of Wescott and Hort, and of Nestle, exhibit its use of the O. T. by printing the borrowed words and phrases in a different type. On a single page of Nestle's small volume no less than twenty such words and phrases have been counted. The Revelation gathers into itself the imagery, language, and objects of the older prophecies, and to know the full mind of the Spirit the student must go back to the source for light and guidance.

All this shows how intimately the prophetic parts of the Bible are united, and how one must take his principles of interpretation from the whole word of

God. To attempt to interpret the book by heathen customs and Gentile habits and history is fatal to the right understanding of it. It is strictly Biblical; it moves within the circle of the prophets of God; it is saturated with Hebrew modes of thought, and is filled and thrilled with Hebrew hopes and assurances. John thinks in Hebrew, writes in the style of a Hebrew prophet, and speaks with the authority of a Hebrew Seer.

(b) Progress marks Biblical prophecy. Daniel's predictions advance beyond those of Isaiah, of Joel, and even of Ezekiel. Zechariah adds features to the growing picture of the End-time, and of the mighty struggle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, which none of the prophets who preceded him have foretold. Jesus in the Olivet prophecy, Matt. xxiv, xxv, Luke xxi, fills into it details, and features, and lines, which make it far more specific, clear, intelligible, and graphic; while Paul, in 2 Thess., with a few strokes of the prophetic pencil, paints the Man of Sin so vividly and so frightfully, as that the monster when he comes will be recognized instantly by the people of God. But the Apocalypse crowns the whole prophetic word with its symbols and pictures, its explanations and its solemn testimonies, its four great series of sevens, all leading to the consummation, to the Advent and the Victory, so that the man of God is furnished an infallible guide for the perilous times that are fast approaching

While the Apocalypse is the final and by far the fullest revelation of the "Things to come," it is not

an independent prophecy, nor is it disconnected with the earlier disclosures of the future which God has been pleased to give us. On the contrary, the book gathers into itself all that precedes it in the same great field, but adds thereto, and unfolds, and reveals more and more, till the colossal portrait, in all its awful features, stands complete.

With two great prophecies the Revelation is most closely and indissolubly bound up, namely, Daniel's and the Lord's Olivet Discourse. How intimately the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are connected every careful reader of the Bible well knows. The supreme subjects, the times, the opposing forces, and the issue of the mighty conflict are in both identical. In both the same theme is prominent, viz.: the Kingdom of God in its deadly struggle with the hostile world-power and its victory over it. Daniel and John are companion books, at once complemental and supplemental of each other. The Lord's Olivet Discourse, as recorded in Matt. xxiv, and Luke xxi, furnishes a sort of frame for much of the Apocalypse. It is beyond dispute that Christ deals with two supreme events, viz.: the Fall of Jerusalem and His Second Advent. It is with the latter event He mainly is concerned. He speaks with much fulness on the closing scenes of the age, of the Tribulation, the signs that announce the nearness of the Advent, and of the Advent itself. It is with the same great crisis of the world that our book deals. In Daniel it is the Gentile World-power, become apostate and hostile to God and His cause and people, that is crushed by the

overwhelming judgment of the Lord. The same monstrous Power, beastly and savage, reappears in the Revelation, and meets there the same tremendous doom. In the Olivet Prophecy of Christ the people of Israel hold a pre-eminent place; and in the Revelation the same chosen people are alike conspicuous. It is not too much to say that the Apocalypse is the expansion, with marvellous additions, of the Olivet Prophecy and the book of Daniel. He who studies both these until he comes to understand them will find the study of our book greatly facilitated.

CHAPTER III.

SYSTEMS OF INTERPRETATION.

IV. Systems of Interpretation. Four methods of interpreting the book are advocated, which we describe as briefly as possible.

The first is that commonly called *Preterism*, to which reference has already been made. Its fundamental principle is this: the Revelation is a dramatic representation of conditions and events existent in John's own day, that its visions must be limited to his horizon, that it has to do with the Roman State, with Israel, Jerusalem, and the Christian Church of the first century, the apostolic age, and with the conflicts then raging. It holds that Nero was the Beast, that the letters of his name written in Hebrew (Nero Cæsar) give the mystic number 666; that John adopted the absurd fiction, that Nero did not die by his own hand, that he was somewhere concealed till the hour should arrive for his reappearance, when most extraordinary things would take place. This, in short, is the rationalistic interpretation which obviously destroys the credibility of the book and reduces it to the level of the wildest fable.

There are those, however, who are evangelical in their belief, who accept the book as an authoritative revelation, but who adopt the preterist explanation. Among these may be mentioned the most recent

writers; as, *e. g.*, Prof. Ramsay (Letters to the Seven Churches, 1905), Dr. Swete (Apocalypse of St. John, 1907, 2d ed.), and Simcox (Cambridge Series of Comm.). They hold that John did actually accept the fiction about Nero, and that he used it to make his teaching effective and illustrative. Both Ramsay and Swete date the book in the reign of Domitian, A. D. 95-6, and they think that Nero's "deadly wound was healed" when the fierce persecutor of the Christians, Domitian, became Emperor. They hold that Domitian, A. D. 81-96, was the Beast of xiii, and Babylon the Harlot City of Rome, xvii. These writers have poured a flood of light on the times and the conditions of the apostolic age; in this respect, as in others also, their books are genuinely helpful. But we believe their exposition of the Revelation utterly breaks down when confronted with the facts in the case. John distinctly tells us that five of the heads of the Beast had fallen (of course when he wrote), that one, the sixth, was existing at the time, and that there was to come the seventh head of the monster, when the mighty events which he was foretelling would be accomplished (xvii: 10). But Domitian was not the seventh head of the Beast, nor the eighth, as this view necessitates he should be. No less than five Emperors ruled between Nero and Domitian, *viz.*: Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, and Titus. Even if the first three of these be thrown out because of their short reigns, still two others remain, one of whom was Emperor for ten years and the other for two. Besides, none of the stupendous events predicted in the

book, as occurring when the Beast is here, took place under any of these Emperors, nor have they to this day, in the judgment of many scholars. The defect of these preterist views is mainly this: a totally inadequate recognition of the inspiration of the book. One who really believes that Jesus Christ gave this revelation to John in Patmos, as John solemnly affirms He did (i: 1-11), cannot for a moment accept the notion that John adopted the fiction about Nero, or that he fancied the visions shown him were being fulfilled in the conditions which surrounded him. Christ's glorious Advent is the center and sum of this book, not John's own times, and not till He comes will its supreme predictions be realized.

The second system of interpretation is the *Spiritual*. By this is meant that the book treats of the conflict between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, the conflict that began with man's sin and fall, that runs through all history, and that will end only with the end of time. The Revelation is a poetic and prophetic picture of the struggle between righteousness and sin, and that accordingly we are not to look for special fulfilments of its predictions; it deals with great principles, with their action, and with their defeats and victories. So the Seals are intended to show one phase of the conflict, the Trumpets another, and the Vials a third—all these are but vivid photographs of the war between good and evil, not specific transactions.

The objections to this interpretation are conclusive, we think. (I.) There is its novelty, to begin with.

The ancient Church did not so regard the book; nor did the Church of the Middle Ages; nor did that of the Reformation; nor has it in later times. Few, indeed, even in our own day accept it. It is advocated, however, by some very able and devout men, as Prof. Milligan, Archdeacon Lee, Prof. Randell, Prof. Purves, and many others. The great teachers of the church have believed that while the stupendous symbolism is to be constantly recognized, the symbols themselves describe real events and actors. With them the Dragon is Satan, the Beast is the hostile power of the state, the harlot the apostate ecclesiastical system, and the heavenly Conqueror is Christ.

(2.) The book itself claims to be genuine prophecy. It fills, or seems to fill, the future with actual beings, some human, some extra-human, some Divine. But, if the spiritual explanation be true, then the book is an exaggeration and its pictures overdrawn and unnatural.

(3.) This theory ignores the plain statements of Revelation. Very distinctly and definitely the inspired writer furnishes certain chronological data that fix periods and events of the future which mark historical sequence and exact time-limits. In chap. xx: 2-7, six times the period of one thousand years is mentioned. It is the number from which we derive the idea of a Millennium. It is described as a period of blessedness, of Satan's imprisonment, of evil suppressed, of righteousness in the ascendancy, of the universal sway of the heavenly Kingdom. That time is not put as ideal, as spiritual or figurative, but as

actual and real. Other numbers are given, as *e. g.*, forty-two months, xi: 2; xiii: 5; twelve hundred and sixty days, xi: 3; xii: 6; time, times, and dividing of time, xii: 14—all which betoken history, reality.

(4.) Evil ever seeks to concentrate in a person or a system; so does good. Revelation shows us evil centralized in the Beast and in the False Prophet, and in their followers. Faithfulness and loyalty to God is also centralized in persons; in the two Witnesses, xi: in the angels who fill so large a place in the action of the book; in the Sun-clothed Woman and her Son; in the Palm-bearers, vii; and the Conqueror and His armies, xix. We cannot accept this method of explaining the book. For it empties it of much of its significance, and impeaches it as guilty of inflation and distortion. Whatever is true in it may be recognized, but as an interpretation it is wholly inadequate.

The third is, the *Historical Interpretation*. Briefly, it means this: the book is a prophetic history of the church and the world from the time of John to the final consummation at Christ's Advent. The predictions deal only with the most prominent events of this vast period, and not with details. The majority of Protestant commentators adopt it. Its dominant idea is this: the Seals, Trumpets and Vials are symbols of successive stages in the world's history. Each set belongs to a distinct class of events. So, likewise the explanatory visions, as chaps. x-xiv, mark epochs that follow each other in temporal sequence. Some of the ablest students of the book have sought to open these prophecies according to this principle, as Bengel,

Mead, Newton, Elliott, Guinness, and the late A. J. Gordon. That there is truth in this method of interpretation cannot be doubted by those who have made ecclesiastical and profane history a real study. The correspondence between the prediction and its historical fulfilment is too obvious and striking to be accidental or fortuitous. The one matches the other so marvellously that God is recognized as the author of the prophecy. It may at once be admitted that the prophecy is so constructed as to touch the salient events of our dispensation. But as a system of interpretation it is incomplete. It leaves huge gaps in the history of the past 1,800 years. A period of 500 years, from A. D. 1000 to 1500 inclusive, it leaves almost untouched. It rests chiefly on the year-day theory, *i. e.*, that a day in prophetic Scripture stands for a year. This is extremely doubtful. Indeed, it does not now commend itself to sober interpreters as once it did. In the judgment of not a few, Tregelles has demonstrated it to be fallacious and unbiblical. But even assuming there is ground for it in the prophetic word, the historical expounders of Revelation are wide apart in its application. For instance, there is a number that frequently occurs in the book, *viz.*: 1,260 days, 42 months, three years and a half—the three denote the same period of time. A year for a day amounts to 1,260 years. The end of the 1,260 is the consummation of our age: it is the supreme crisis. But from what point is it to be dated? What is its *terminus a quo*? Here disagreement and divergence at once arise. Unanimity as to the starting-point of the 1,260

years there is none. Joachim (c. 1200) begins with A. D. 1 and ends with A. D. 1260; Melancthon, A. D. 660-2000; Bengel, 576-1836; Mede, 455-1715; Fleming, 606-1848; Gill, 606-1866; Elliott, 608-1868; Cunningham, 533-1792; Fysh, 727-1987; Guinness, 672-1932.

The fourth is the *Futurist*, which holds that the predictions, particularly from chap. iv to chap. xx: 6, have their fulfilment in a brief space of time at the close of our dispensation—the whole being limited to some seven years, which end with the Lord's Advent. With much of this view the writer agrees, not with all of it. This will appear as we proceed with the examination of the various parts of the book.

CHAPTER IV.

PLAN AND STRUCTURE.

V. The Plan of the Revelation. Its structure is most artistic, unequalled in this respect, perhaps, by any other book of the Bible. To the superficial reader it presents a different appearance. To him it appears complex, confused, enigmatical, even unintelligible. It was on account of this popular notion of the book (in itself totally false) that Dr. South made his profane remark that has done no small injury—"that mysterious, extraordinary . . . book called the Revelation . . . which the more it is studied the less it is understood, as generally finding a man cracked or making him so." To the devout and patient student, who seeks to know the Lord's mind in all His word, it has no such character as South ascribes to it. He may not be able to grasp its full meaning, he may have to leave great tracts in it wholly unexplored because he cannot penetrate them, but he finds exquisite beauty in its structure, divine wisdom and infinite skill in the correlation and the combination of its various scenes and visions. Throughout a mighty plan runs. Order rules. God's purposes are disclosed. The book is an Apocalypse, not an enigma nor a puzzle.

First, note its use of numbers. This is remarkable both for frequency and peculiarity. We might truly say that Revelation has a numerical structure. Its

form to some considerable extent is governed by numbers.

(1.) *Three*. It is very prominent, nor is it confined to the idea of Trinity. It embraces more than individual completeness; it moulds sentences and paragraphs; it describes unseen and eternal realities. In i: 4, 5, 6, are three sets of three: we have "him who is, and who was, and who is to come;" Jesus Christ, "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth;" believers are "loosed from their sins, and made kings and priests unto God." John himself seems to assign a threefold division to this book, i: 19. "Write, therefore, the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter." The prominence given the number three in the fourth chapter is remarkable. In iv: 1 there is the door opened, the voice that summons John on high, and the promise. The nameless Occupant of the heavenly throne is like a jasper, and a sardius gem, and the emerald-like rainbow encircles the throne, iv: 2. Three things distinguish the twenty-four elders; they are enthroned, are arrayed in white raiment, and are gold-crowned, iv: 4. Out of the throne proceed lightnings, and voices, and thunder, iv: 5. Before the throne, and round about it, and within it are three objects, viz.: seven lamps, a glassy sea, and four living creatures, iv: 5, 6. The four living creatures chant the Trisagion, "Holy, Holy, Holy"—addressed to "the Almighty who was and who is, and who is to come;" and they give Him "glory, and honor, and

thanks," iv: 8, 9. The gold-crowned Elders, likewise, in their magnificent chant give Him "glory, and honor, and power," iv: 11. Moreover, there are three Woe Trumpets, viii: 13; three frog-like spirits issue from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet, xvi: 13. In chap. xviii: 8, three plagues come upon Babylon—death, mourning and famine; and in the same chapter three classes of men wail over Babylon's Fall, Kings, ver. 9; merchants, ver. 11; seamen, ver. 17. These are but specimens of the significant use of this number *three*.

(2.) *Four*. By some this is supposed to be the number of creation. It certainly is found often in connection with earth and its forces. Chap. iv: 6-8 describes the four Living Creatures, which have four faces, viz.: the ox, the lion, the eagle, and man. They are the four great heads of creation, and they are most intimately associated with the Throne, iv: 6 (cf. Ezek. i: 5-28; x). Mention is made of the four corners of the earth, of the four angels stationed thereat, holding the four winds in their grasp, vii: 1; four angels, likewise, are stationed at the river Euphrates, their watch and their action are for a four-fold division of time, an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, ix: 14, 15. In the awful carnage of the trodden Winepress, the blood of the slain extends for 1,600 furlongs, *i. e.*, the square of four multiplied by 100. In the first four Seals, four horses go forth at the call of the four living creatures, vi: 1-7. Moreover, four often enters into the structure of sentences;

as, *e. g.*, v: 9; viii: 5; x: 11; xvi: 18; xviii: 22, etc. In xxi: 8 there are eight descriptive epithets employed touching the wicked, two sets of four, or four sets of two.

In the messages to the Seven Churches there is a division of them into two groups of three and four respectively. In the first three, *viz.*: Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos, the exhortation to hear what the Spirit says precedes the promise to the overcomer, ii: 7, 11, 17. But in the four that follow, *viz.*: Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, the exhortation to hear what the Spirit says comes after the promise to the overcomer, ii: 26-29; iii: 5, 6; iii: 12, 13; iii: 21, 22. This is a remarkable combination of the numbers three and four. Its significance is difficult to determine with any satisfaction. These also are but specimens of the use of four.

(3.) *Seven.* This number is not only employed to denote so many individual objects, but it enters very largely into the whole plan of the book. Seven is the number of completeness, of perfection, and of dispensational fulness. All readers know that there are four sets of sevens that cover a very considerable section of the book. These are the seven messages to the seven churches, ii, iii. The vision of the seven seals, which embraces v-viii: 1 (with an episode between the sixth and the seventh of the series, *viz.*: vii). The vision of the seven trumpets, viii: 2-xi: 16 (with an episode between the sixth and the seventh, x-xi: 13). The vision of the seven vails, xv: 5-xvi. Thus nearly one-half of the book belongs to this fourfold series.

There are fourteen (a double seven) Songs or Choruses in the Revelation, which the American Revision rightly indicates by printing them on the page as if they were poetry or quotations; which in fact they are. These Songs are found through the book in the following chapters: iv: 8, 11; v: 9, 12, 13; vii: 10, 12; xi: 15, 17, 18; xii: 10-12; xv: 3, 4; xix: 1, 2, 5, 6-8.

These Songs or rhythmical utterances are all spoken by heavenly beings and in heaven, with one sole exception, *i. e.*, chap. v: 13, in which every created thing in heaven, on earth, and under the earth breaks out in tuneful ascription of praise and honor and blessing to the Lamb, because He is now at length about to redeem by power His vast inheritance, even as He has once for all redeemed it by blood. It is gloriously right and fitting that all creation should lift up its voice in a majestic anthem of praise, since its time of deliverance is finally come.

This, notable as it is, does not exhaust the use of this number. It enters into passages where no direct mention of it is made. Thus, in v: 12, seven attributes of praise are ascribed to the Lamb that was slain; the white-robed company in vii: 12 worship God with the like number of ascriptions. Chap. xiv: 1-20 consists of seven parts, *viz.*: the Lamb with His glorious company on mount Zion: the everlasting gospel: Babylon's fall: the solemn threat against any fellowship with the Beast: happy lot of those who die in the Lord from henceforth: the harvest: the vintage. Besides, the chapter mentions six angels, and One like the Son of Man. The place of honor is given the Son of

man—three angels are on each side of Him, and He is in the midst, presiding over the vast movements. The climax of the series is in the number four, where He sits on the white Cloud.

The “seven spirits before the throne” (i: 4) express the infinite perfection of the Holy Spirit. The “seven stars” in Christ’s right hand (i: 16) denote the complete authority He has over the churches. The Lamb has “seven horns and seven eyes” (v: 6), which denote the almighty power, the supreme intelligence, and the perfect omniscience with which He is endowed.

This may suffice to indicate how deeply the number seven is woven into the structure of Revelation, and how it dominates it. It would hardly be going too far to assert that the book is built on the principle of the septenary.

(4.) *Ten* is the number of secular organization and of power. The Beast has ten horns, and on his horns, ten diadems (xiii: 1). These are symbols of power. Ten joined with seven signifies the perfection of satanic force and worldly dominion. The Beast with seven heads and ten horns is the embodiment of devilish energy, and of apostate, imperial supremacy.

(5.) *Twelve* is the number of final and eternal perfection and duration. The Celestial City, the New Jerusalem (xxi, xxii: 5), has twelve foundations, with twelve gates, with twelve angel sentinels and guardians; the City is a majestic cube, twelve thousand furlongs being the measure of its form. The tree

of life yields twelve manner of fruits, and yields them through twelve months of a cycle.

Auberlin does not exaggerate this feature of the Apocalypse when he says, "The history of salvation is mysteriously governed by holy numbers. They are the scaffolding of the organic edifice. They are not merely outward indications of time, but indications of nature and essence. Scripture and antiquity put numbers as the fundamental forms of things where we put ideas."

A second significant phase of the structure of Revelation deserves careful scrutiny. It may be called the plan of *recapitulation*, or better, perhaps, *parallelism*. What is meant is this: the chief series of visions, *e. g.*, the Seals, Trumpets, and Vials, do not succeed each other in historical and chronological sequence, but move side by side. They do not all have the same starting-point, but they all arrive at the same goal; namely, the final consummation. They all lead up to the transcendent event which is the central theme of the book, the personal Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Victorinus, the earliest commentator on the Apocalypse, wrote: "The order of the things said is not to be regarded, since often the Holy Spirit when He has run to the end of the last time again returns to the same times and supplies what He has less fully expressed." His view is that of many modern expositors.

The same peculiarity of structure appears in the book of Daniel. In chap. ii of that book we have the four hostile World Monarchies represented by a

huge metallic Image and its destruction by the Stone. In chap. vii, the same World-Power is symbolized by four predatory beasts. Chap. viii gives the prophetic history of two of these same Powers, and chaps. x, xi, xii, trace the action and the overthrow of the same great enemy. Like John, Daniel traces one line of prediction down to the consummation; then he returns to follow a second, then a third, and finally a fourth—all terminating at the End-time. It is prophetic recapitulation, apocalyptic parallelism. It is a style peculiar to these two books of the Bible. To ignore it, or to fail to recognize it as the fundamental phase of the book's structure, is to deprive the student of the true interpretation, and is sure to lead into all sorts of vagaries and speculations.

Proof of such parallelism of the great Vision above referred to is now to be submitted. James Smith calls the process "folding back," *i. e.*, each vision as it is introduced and described folds back upon the vision which precedes it. In other words, the process is that of contemporaneousness, and not that of succession at all, as so many interpreters of the book have thought.

It is very noteworthy that the Seals, Trumpets, and Vials, all alike end in mysterious "voices," and in cosmical convulsions and revolutions. (The introduction of the angel-trumpeters is before the effects of the opening of the seventh Seal are described, viii: 2; their beginning to sound is after the seventh Seal's effects are announced, viii: 3-5.) The opening of the seventh Seal is followed by "voices, and thunderings,

and lightnings, and an earthquake," viii: 5. The seventh Trumpet is succeeded by "lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail," xi: 19. The pouring out of the seventh Vial is followed by "voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great," xvi: 18. It will be noted that these Voices and Cosmic Convulsions occur under the seventh of each group, and that they are identical in character, and almost entirely identical in language. Unmistakably they point to the same event, they describe the like tremendous phenomena, they belong to the same world-wide catastrophe; namely, the final consummation, the End-time, when Jesus Christ shall again appear in majesty and glory in this our earth, and forever terminate the deadly struggle between His rule and Satan's. It seems perfectly clear from the facts just stated that these Visions are contemporaneous, that they follow the same general course, that they pertain to the same period of time, and that, therefore, they are parallel with each other. They are synchronous; not successive, with long intervals between.

Furthermore, the student of the Revelation cannot fail to note the striking similarity, the almost exact identity which subsists between the action of the Trumpets and of the Vials. They belong to the same sphere, they move in the same circle of events, and cover the like field. The subjoined table confirms the foregoing statement:

Trumpets.	Vials.
First. The earth, chap. viii: 7.	The earth, chap. xvi: 2.
Second. The sea, viii: 8.	The sea, xvi: 3.
Third. Rivers, fountains, viii: 10.	Rivers and fountains, xvi: 4.
Fourth. Sun, moon, stars, viii: 12.	The sun, xvi: 8.
Fifth. The abyss, king Abaddon, ix: 11.	Throne of the Beast, xvi: 10.
Sixth. River Euphrates, ix.	River Euphrates, xvi: 12.
Seventh. Voices, thunders, etc., xi: 15, 19.	Voices, thunders, etc., 17, 18.

A careful inspection of this table is enough to persuade us that these two groups of visions move along the same lines, although each has peculiarities that pertain to itself. They touch the same points, they begin, they progress, and they end precisely alike. The main difference between the two lies in the extent of their respective action; the Trumpets are restricted in their action; the Vials are universal. The Trumpets smite the third part of the earth, the third part of the sea, the third part of the rivers and fountains, and the third part of the sun. These four Trumpets are limited thus to a definite and partial area. The four Vials corresponding to these Trumpets are not so restricted, they blast the whole of that which they strike. In the first and second of the Woe Trumpets there is exemption for the grass and the trees, but unutterable judgment for the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads, unutterable torment, likewise, for the third part of men. The fifth and sixth Vials are not confined to a particular sphere as

are the Woe Trumpets; they desolate the Beast's throne, they strike his kingdom with judicial blindness, they marshal the whole apostate world for the final and overwhelming conflict, the battle of the great day of God the Almighty. The seventh Trumpet peals forth the glad news, "The Kingdom of the world is to become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." The pouring out of the seventh Vial brings the "great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done." Fairbairn is right when he says, "These two lines of symbolic representation . . . are alike in their commencement, their progress, and their termination." The Trumpets start with a limited infliction of the wrath of God upon the guilty rebels of the last days, but they deepen in sevenfold energy as they move on to the end. In like manner the Vials intensify in severity, for they are the "seven last plagues," and in them "the wrath of God is fulfilled."

Moreover, certain "catchwords," as Wordsworth calls them, bind the visions together, thus demonstrating the identity of the objects in view. Thus, the fellow-servants and brethren of the martyrs who were to be slain (vi: 9-11) connect with the blessed dead who die in the Lord (xiv: 12, 13), and with those who share in the first resurrection (xx: 6). The earthquake under the sixth Seal connects with the earthquake of the sixth Trumpet (vi: 12; xi: 13). Under the fifth Trumpet the ungodly seek death, and death flies from them (ix: 6). Under the fifth Vial men gnaw their tongues for pain and blaspheme God

(xvi: 10, 11). The Beast which first appears between the sixth and the seventh Trumpets (xi: 7) connects with the Beast of xiii and the Red Dragon of xii. The sealing of 144,000 (vii: 1-8) connects with the same number in chap. xiv: 1-5. The lamb-like Beast from the earth speaks as a Dragon (xiii: 11). The word Dragon occurs twelve times in the Revelation, and is always applied to Satan. This earth-Beast, therefore, that looks so lamb-like, is in reality satanic, for he is the servant and tool of the Dragon (xii: 9). He is the False Prophet. By such "catchwords" the various visions and parts of the book are knit together in closest unity. The same peculiarity of structure is seen in the various "episodes" and intercalary visions. Thus, the episode of the "Sealed and the Saved," vii: 1-17, is placed between the sixth and the seventh Seals. The episode relating to the angel with the little book and the two witnesses is inserted between the sixth and seventh Trumpet, x, xi: 1-14. The episode of the gathering of the world's army for the final and decisive battle is placed between the sixth and seventh Vial, xvi: 13-16. All this, and much might be added to it, displays how the Seer has riveted together his matchless book into a perfect unity of parts and of contents.

John even ties up his predictions with those of Daniel, as the four wild Beasts of Daniel (Dan. vii) appear also in the Apocalypse (xiii: 2).

Once more: in addition to the episodes, there are intercalated visions in the progress of the Revelation, which are essential parts of its structure, and which ad-

vance its central idea, the coming of the Lord and the establishment of His Kingdom in victory over the whole earth. These are, the Sun-clothed Woman and the Dragon (xii); the Beast and the False Prophet (xiii); the mighty program of the End-time (xiv); Babylon, the Beast, and Babylon's Doom (xvii, xviii, xix: 10). It is to be noted that Chaps. xii-xiv are interposed between the Trumpet and the Vial Visions; that chaps. xvii-xix: 10 are interposed between the Vial judgments and the actual, visible Advent, judgment, and first resurrection described in xix: 11-xx: 6. A large part of the book is thus made up of the episodes and intercalated visions, and they are all explanatory and interpretative. Without them, how much more enigmatical and difficult the book would be, and how immense the chasm would be in it if these were dropped out.

The Revelation encloses visions within visions, and scenes within scenes. The query may arise, Can any explanation be made of this peculiar plan of the book—this involved and complex structure? None; save that it pleased the Lord so to construct it; and this should satisfy the believer. Two advantages to us, however, seem to be derived from this divine method of revelation. One is this: it serves to display in the most graphic manner the vastness of the field which the book covers. Beyond all doubt the Revealer deals with the world's crisis, with the consummation of all God's ways with the earth, with the time when the "mystery of God shall be finished" (x: 7). Heaven, earth, and hell will then engage in a struggle such as

our planet has never known before, and probably will never again know. The issue will be eternal victory. So far as we in our profound ignorance may perceive, the sublime symbolism of the book could alone set forth adequately the magnitude of the "battle of the great day of God, the Almighty." Another is: the plan affords the introduction of circumstantial details, and minute descriptions of the forces and influences that will come into collision at the time of the End. After the Seer has traced one line of prediction down to the crisis and climax, he returns and starts afresh with another, going over the same road, but presenting other phases and aspects of the same awful period. This he does again and again, for one set of symbols cannot tell all he has to communicate; he must add, expand, interject before he has done. Other features more dreadful than any yet sketched must be shown; deeper and darker shades must be put in, more lurid and appalling colors must be laid on, before the stupendous picture is complete. Each vision in turn contributes an essential part to the whole, and the whole reveals the character and the scenes of the last days with a fulness and distinctness of outline and detail such as could not be presented by any other plan.

CHAPTER V.

ANALYSIS—THREE FORMS.

VI. Analysis. Three forms are submitted. The first is the partition of the contents under heads and particulars as these are marked in the book itself. It rests on the plan and structure of Part V.

The second is a tabular exhibition of the contents, following, mainly, the outlines constructed by Principal Randell, and by the late Dr. Nathaniel West.

The third furnishes still another partition of the contents, and this is copied from the very suggestive "Analysis of the Apocalypse," by Dr. W. J. Erdman.

It is fondly hoped that the three will serve to open to the reader this profound and difficult book, as, perhaps, he may not have seen nor understood it hitherto. Certain it is, the three studied together, as well as separately, will tend to lead him into a larger knowledge of the book, and a more distinct and definite view of its contents, than perhaps he might not otherwise receive.

FIRST.

- A. Prologue, chap. i: 1-8
- B. Vision of the Glorified Son of Man, i: 9-20.
- C. Epistles to the Seven Churches, ii, iii.

- D. Vision of Heaven, introductory, iv-v.
The Throne, The Elders, Living Beings, Sealed Book and the Lamb.
- E. Opening of the Seven Seals, vi-viii: 1.
First Four Seals, vi: 1-8, Fifth, Martyrs, vi: 9-11.
Sixth, supernatural signs, vi: 12-17; Seventh, viii: 1, 5.
Episode: (a) Sealing 144,000 of Israel, vii: 1-8.
(b) Innumerable company of Saved Gentiles, vii: 9-17.
- F. Sounding of Seven Trumpets, viii: 7-xi: 19.
First Four Trumpets, viii: 7-12; Three Woe Trumpets, viii: 13-xi: 19.
Episode: (a) Angel and Little Book, x.
(b) Temple and Two Witnesses, xi: 1-14
- G. Visions Interposed between Trumpets and Vials, chaps. xii-xiv.
Sun-clothed Woman and Dragon, xii.
Beast from the Sea, xiii: 1-10.
Beast from the Earth, xiii: 11-18.
Lamb and His Company on Mt. Zion, xiv: 1-5.
Four Great Proclamations, xiv: 6-13.
The Harvest, xiv: 14-16.
The Vintage, xiv: 17-20.
- H. Vision of the Seven Vials, xv, xvi.
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- K. Final Revolt and Final Judgment, xx: 7-15.
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SECOND.

The Christophany: Vision of the glorified Son of Man, chapter i: 1-20.	Consummation; Advent of Christ.
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<p style="text-align: center;">The Vision of Heaven, chaps. iv, v.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Throne, Seven Lamps of Fire, 24 Elders, 4 Living Creatures, Angels, Book, Lamb.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">The Seven Seals, chaps. vi, vii, viii: 1-5.</p> <p>1 Seal. 2 Seal. 3 Seal. 4 Seal. 5 Seal. 6 Seal. 7 Seal.</p> <p>White Red Black Pale Mar- Signs</p> <p>Horse, Horse, Horse, Horse, tyrs,</p> <p>vi: 1, 2. vi: 3, 4. vi: 5, 6. vi: 7, 8. vi: 9-11. vi: 12-17. [Episode] viii: 1-5.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">vii—</p>	The End.
<p style="text-align: center;">The Seven Trumpets, chaps. viii: 6-xi.</p> <p>1st 2d 3d 4th 5th 6th [Episode] 7th</p> <p>viii: 7. viii: 8, 9. viii: 10, 11. viii: 12, 13. ix: 1-12. ix: 13-21. [x, xi: 14] xi: 15-19.</p>	The End.
<p style="text-align: center;">Interposed Visions, explanatory and interpretive, chaps. xii-xiv.</p> <p>Sign in Heaven, xii. Beasts from Sea and Earth, xiii. Program of Events, xiv. Harvest and Vintage.</p> <p>Sun-clothed Woman and Great Red Dragon.</p>	The End.
<p style="text-align: center;">The Seven Vials, chaps. xv, xvi.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Last Plagues.</p> <p>1st 2d 3d 4th 5th 6th [Episode] 7th</p> <p>xvi: 2. xvi: 3. xvi: 4-7. xvi: 8, 9. xvi: 10, 11. xvi: 12. [xvi: 13-16.] xvi: 17-21.</p>	The End.
<p style="text-align: center;">Interposed Explanatory Visions, chaps. xvii-xix: 1-10.</p> <p>The Harlot Babylon and Beast, xvii. Doom, xviii, xix: 1-5. Marriage of Lamb, xix: 6-10.</p>	The End.
<p style="text-align: center;">Visions of Epiphany of Christ: Beasts and armies overwhelmed—Resurrection of Saints, chaps. xix: 11-xx: 6.</p>	The End. Millennium.
<p style="text-align: center;">Vision of the Last Revolt and the Last Judgment, chap. xx: 7-15.</p>	Absolute End.
<p style="text-align: center;">Vision of the City of God—Paradise Restored, chaps. xxi, xxii.</p>	Eternity.

THIRD.

An Analysis of the Apocalypse.

[W. J. ERDMAN, D.D.]

I THE SEVEN CHURCHES

1: 1-8	The Prologue
1: 9-20	The Son of Man
2: 1-3: 22	The Seven Churches

II THE SEVEN SEALS

4: 1-5: 14	Introduction	The Throne, the Lamb and the Book
6: 1-17	Progression	The Six Seals
7: 1-17	Episode	The Sealed and the Saved
8: 1	Consummation	The Seventh Seal

III THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

8: 2-5	Introduction	The Angel and the Incense
8: 6-9: 21	Progression	The Six Trumpets
10: 1-11: 14	Episode	The Angel, the little Book, the Two Witnesses
11: 15-19	Consummation	The Seventh Trumpet

IV THE SEVEN PERSONAGES

12: 1-13: 1 a	Introduction	The Two Signs in Heaven
13: 1 b-18	Progression	The Great Tribulation
14: 1-13	Episode	The First Fruits and the Three Angels
14: 14-20	Consummation	The Harvest and the Vintage

V THE SEVEN VIALS

15: 1-8	Introduction	The Overcomers and the Seven Angels
16: 1-12	Progression	The Six Vials
16: 13-16	Episode	The Gathering of the Kings
16: 17-21	Consummation	The Seventh Vial

VI THE SEVEN DOOMS

17: 1-18	Introduction	The Babylon and the Beast
18: 1-24	Progression	The Doom of Babylon
19: 1-10	Episode	The Four Hallel's
19: 11-20: 15	Consummation	The Six Final Dooms

VII THE SEVEN NEW THINGS

21: 1-8	Introduction	New Heaven, Earth, Peoples
21: 9-22: 5	The New Jerusalem	City, Temple
22: 6-21	The Epilogue	Luminary, Paradise

CHAPTER VI.

THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES, chaps. ii, iii.

They are inscribed thus: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia (i: 4). Asia, of course, does not mean the Continent, nor even Asia Minor, but the Province of Asia in Western Asia Minor. The Seven Churches were contiguous to each other, the greatest distance between any two of them being some fifty miles, while in the case of some, *e. g.*, Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia, hardly twenty miles lay between. Other groups of Christians besides those named were found in the same territory even in Paul's time (A. D. 62-3), as at Colossae and Hierapolis (Col. iv: 13). Ignatius (c. A. D. 110, *i. e.*, less than twenty years after John wrote the book) addressed letters to prosperous churches at Tralles and Magnesia in the same region, and it is presumable they existed when the Revelation was sent forth. Philip the Evangelist and his daughters, who entertained Paul in their home at Cæsarea (Acts xxi: 8, 9), afterwards removed to Hierapolis, where Polycarp, disciple of John and pastor at Smyrna, saw the daughters, and no doubt talked with them of the great Apostle (Prof. Gregory). Near this same period (c. A. D. 120-30) Papias, who perhaps saw and heard John himself, became the chief pastor at Hierapolis. All these

various churches, Colossae, Hierapolis, Tralles, Magnesia, and others far more widely known and influential flourished at the close of the first century. Now, how happens it that these assemblies, so prominent and important, are passed by in total silence in the book, while those of which we know little or nothing, except in the case of two, beyond what is told us in chaps. ii, iii, hold so conspicuous a place in the Lord's messages? Why are these seven singled out and addressed, and all the rest of the whole world ignored? The only reasonable explanation is this: These seven here addressed contained in themselves the characteristic features of the entire church in John's day, while the others did not. Accordingly, far more than local and historical interest attaches to them. These Seven embraced in their conditions, in their circumstances and in their tendencies the prophetic history of the entire Christian Body from John down to the final consummation at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, the seven churches and the messages addressed to them represent the whole church of John's time, and they likewise sketch in broad outlines its history to the end.

This conclusion is warranted by the following considerations: (1) The divine command to the Seer was to write out and send the whole Apocalypse to these churches: "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches," i: 11. Certainly the Revelation was not intended for these Christian assemblies alone, but for all the people of God throughout the earth. (2) The book is one of sym-

bols from the first chapter to the last, and if chaps. ii, iii, form an exception, they constitute an unaccountable anomaly. (3) The term "mystery"—"the mystery of the seven stars . . . and of the seven golden candlesticks" (i: 20)—points to the hidden meaning of the symbols, "the sacred secret signified by them" (Lyra). (4) The mystic use of the number *seven* throughout the book that in every instance denotes completeness, perfection, clearly indicates the symbolic character of these chapters. (5) The contents of the messages contemplate the whole church and its entire history, as the repeated announcement of Christ's coming proves, ii: 16, 25; iii: 3, 11. (6) The appeal to "hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" attests the same truth, the language includes the whole body (cf. i: 19, 20; iv: 1; xxii: 6, 16). Not a single church is exhorted, but all "the churches."

Each of the seven had marked peculiarities and characteristic features that cannot be restricted to one local assembly, for they foreshadow the like state in the church universal to the close of the dispensation. A study of their moral condition, however brief and cursory, will serve to show that their excellencies and their defects so faithfully and unsparingly pointed out by the glorified Lord cannot be applied exclusively to the close of the apostolic age. They have reproduced themselves in the professing body in all the subsequent centuries down to the present day.

The "angel" of Ephesus (*i. e.*, Christ's messenger

and representative, certainly not a heavenly being nor a Diocesan Bishop who had no existence in the first century, but the responsible pastor), is both praised and censured. The praise is cordial, and the censure tender but unsparing. Ephesus was the mother of the Asian churches, and the titles our Lord here takes describe His supreme authority and His abiding presence. This assembly was zealous in every good work, steadfast in its testimony, patient under trial, intolerant of false teachers; but she had declined from her first love, she had "fallen." Will any deny that the like condition is exhibited in evangelical bodies of the present time? Zeal, activity in service and works of all sorts predominate; but is love for Christ, the longing to see Him, to be with Him, to be filled with His loving presence what it once was or should be?

Smyrna (ii: 8-11) is the martyr church, and represents suffering. "Tribulation for ten days" may foreshadow the persecutions under the Roman Empire, but must not be confined to that period. Smyrna prefigures the suffering the people of God endure through their entire history. The Lord's titles here, as in every message, are exactly adapted to the state of the church. He is the first and the last, who was dead and is alive again; and His servants who suffer and die for His name shall also live again.

A serious condition is found at Pergamum, ii: 12-17. She dwells where "Satan's throne is." At Pergamum Satan was enthroned and held his court. The reference is, probably, to the new Cæsar-worship which was fast spreading over the Roman world. It

was pre-eminent at Pergamum (Profs. Ramsay, Swete). The fanatical and jealous Domitian exerted his vast power to advance the absurd cult, and he sought by wily schemes to have himself worshipped as a god! The insidious plea was: "What evil is there in saying, 'Lord Cæsar,' or burning a few grains of incense before his statue?" But this would be idolatrous, would be to "commit fornication," and to deny Christ! There were those there who taught this vile doctrine—"the teaching of Balaam," who taught Balak to allure Israel to their ruin when he could not obtain the Lord's permission to curse them. Alliance with the world is chiefly meant. The roaring lion is exchanged for the serpent, the adversary for the deceiver. Persecution, painful as it is, is not so perilous as worldly alliance. When Constantine recognized Christianity, when he sat in the Council of Nicea as an adviser, the fatal way to union of church and state began to be prepared. Pergamum thus becomes a prophetic symbol of the Christian Body in its lamentable connection with the godless World-power.

A more subtle danger appears in Thyatira, ii: 18-29. The virus in this church is the crafty teaching of the Woman Jezebel. She calls herself a prophetess, she seduces and corrupts the new people of God as Ahab's heathen wife did both her husband and Israel. It is not necessary we should understand that a veritable woman lived and wrought her evil in Thyatira, although the reading, "thy wife Jezebel," is well supported, and is very suggestive. The language

is symbolical; the meaning of the symbol is unmistakable; it points to a wicked influence, seductive, secret, powerful, that, if unchecked, would subvert the whole testimony of the church and lead these converted heathen straight back into idolatry with all its impure practices. Thyatira typically with this prophetess teaching and debasing and corrupting is the Lord's adumbration of the rise and reign of Popery, a system idolatrous and persecuting, Jezebel-like, practicing its wickedness under a religious disguise.

A faithful remnant in Thyatira is recognized and separated from the mass of the professing body—"But to you I say, to the rest," ver. 24. They are the historical types of those Christians who through the centuries stood aloof from unfaithful Christendom and who worshipped God in spirit and truth.

All this evinces the predictive character of the Seven Messages and Churches.

But may not these Seven Churches mark off prophetically seven periods or stages in the church's history from the Apostles to the end of the dispensation? So many think, from Joseph Mede and Sir Isaac Newton to the present time. There is harmony among these writers as to the fact of such periods, there is not as to the exact periods covered by them. Perhaps the nearest to uniformity is found in the following temporal partition: Ephesus prefigures the apostolic age closing with the first century: Smyrna, the age of the persecutions, the martyr time from A. D. 100 to A. D. 325: Pergamos, church and state united, to the middle of the eighth century: Thyatira, the Mid-

dle Ages : Sardis, the times succeeding the Reformation, from the close of the sixteenth century to the latter half of the eighteenth : Philadelphia, to about our own time : Laodicea, the last period when rejection and judgment take place and the End arrives. The Laodicean stage is still future, though there are unmistakable symptoms and premonitions that it has almost arrived.

The above distribution is not altogether satisfactory, for it is not historically accurate. For example, Smyrna undoubtedly marks the period of martyrdom, but two of the most virulent and frightful persecutions which the Church has ever suffered occurred in the first century, under Nero and Domitian. And long after Constantine and the so-called conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, uncounted multitudes of the purest and the best of God's servants on earth went to the stake or were slain by the sword during the Middle Ages and every century since. Smyrna cannot rightly be confined to the time between A. D. 100-325.

No more can Sardis (iii: 1-6) be restricted to post-Reformation times, as some would fain have us believe. For while a dead formalism pervaded Christendom in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was by no means universal, as the Pietists of Germany, the Huguenots of France, and the Puritans of Britain attest. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" describes far more closely the dark period lying between the Pontifical savages and pagans, Popes Innocent III and Leo X—a period of some three centuries. In the hundred years preceding the

Reformation (A. D. 1410-1510) the Roman See sank down to the lowest point in infamy that it has ever reached. Four Popes, "each worse than the others" (as Italians say), by their loathsome characters and their foul deeds, stamped that century with eternal disgrace. They were known as John XXIII, Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, and Alexander VI. It was the deplorable state into which the church had fallen that made the Reformation a necessity if Christianity were to survive. No interpretation of the Seven Churches which contradicts church history can be right. The Sardis condition belongs to pre-Reformation times rather than to any stage in the history of Protestantism. The Seven Churches do mark stages of history, but often they overlap, two or more of them covering the same period. Indeed, they are mirrors in which the condition of the universal church may see itself reflected at any stage of its existence.

The characteristics of the church of Philadelphia distinguish our day—so some rashly assert. It is a joy to know that there are multitudes of Christians whose fidelity, devotion and hope for the Lord's speedy coming entitle them to rank as saints of the Philadelphian type. But side by side with these are other multitudes, called Christians, who exhibit the worst features found in Pergamum, in Thyatira, in Sardis, and in Laodicea. Let us not be blinded either by a false optimism or a stupid pessimism. We believe that all the phases of these seven assemblies of Asia co-exist in our day. The last two of the Seven, viz.: Philadelphia and Laodicea, demand a more extended

study than can here be given them. Some remarks, however, touching them are submitted, for it is believed that misapprehension of the Lord's messages to them largely prevails.

Philadelphia. Christ promises to keep those who keep the word of His patience (iii: 10). The promise is to keep them from the "hour (season) of temptation (trial), that *hour* which is to come upon the whole world, to try (tempt) them that dwell upon the earth," iii: 10. Noteworthy is the term "trial," or "temptation." It is not named *the tribulation* so often mentioned in prophetic Scripture (vii: 14; Matt. xxiv: 21; Mark xiii: 19, etc.), but *trial*. No doubt it is closely associated with the Great Tribulation, but the word here used seems deliberately chosen, and points to the frightful dangers and temptations to which God's people will be exposed at the time of the End. We know from Rev. xiii: 13-15, 2 Thess. ii: 9-12, that portentous "signs" and lying "wonders" and the "deceit of unrighteousness," wrought by the Beast and the False Prophet, will daze and fascinate vast throngs of men, nay, we are told the world itself will "wonder after the beast," and "worship" him. There will be believers who must face that tremendous peril. This will be their trial—deny God, or die. It is the troublous time which immediately precedes the Advent. Hence Christ adds, "I come quickly." It is the End-time, the close of the Church period and of the dispensation.

But how will he keep these saints from the hour of trial? Many excellent students of the Revelation

answer, By taking them away from earth into heaven. Accordingly, they find here in this promise the "rapture" of I Thess. iv: 16, 17. In such case these saints do not go into the trial at all, the rapture antedates the trial by some short space of time, some say seven years, others make it longer. It would be a blessed thing if this view could be substantiated, but it cannot. The language of the promise itself is fatal to it: "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation which cometh," etc. The natural and obvious meaning is, the safekeeping of them in the midst of worldwide trial, not exemption from it by being caught up to heaven. The preposition "out of" (*ek*) signifies exactly this, and not rapture before the trial begins. In all John's writings there is but one parallel passage with this: Jno. xvii: 15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." "Keep them from the evil" is identical in structure with "keep them from the hour of trial." None can possibly mistake what the Lord meant in His prayer: His disciples were to remain in the world, but He asks that they be kept from its evil, or from the evil one who is its god. So precisely in Rev. iii: 10, Philadelphian saints are to be in the trial, but safeguarded therein. This explanation is confirmed by the words that follow: "Behold I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." Christ lays upon them the responsibility of vigilance, of continual effort. Each church, Philadelphia no less than the others, is called to guard its own inheritance, lest

through unfaithfulness or apathy it lose its crown. The solemn exhortation involves the fact of trial and of danger. Philadelphia is to be in the trial, but kept safely in it, not raptured away before the trial begins.

Laodicea. This is the last stage and the worst of all, the most hopeless. Christ stands here without, as if shut out of His own house, a stranger who knocks at His own door for admittance. He intimates that the condition now reached has become intolerable, nauseating; rejection and judgment are held back only so long as He waits and knocks. Obviously when this deplorable state is reached the "falling away" (apostasy) of 2 Thess. ii: 3 is at the flood; the world is ripe for the *parousia* of the Man of Sin and the day of Christ.

There is some resemblance between this Laodicea condition and "Babylon," the great Harlot of chaps. xvii, xviii. Laodicea boasts of her wealth and her self-sufficiency, totally oblivious of her true state as wretched, poor, blind and naked (iii: 17). The Harlot's proud boast is, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." She is decked with gold, precious stones, with purple and scarlet (xviii: 7, 16), rich and contented as Laodicea. The Lord's call, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (xviii: 4), is much like that to Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me" (iii: 20). There are saints in Babylon, and in Laodicea likewise. The

whole attitude of the Saviour before this Seventh Church indicates that He has people in it, that these His people must be separated from the corrupt and apostate company before His judgment falls. And the same thing happens precisely with those associated with Babylon. These, too, are called out before the wrath falls on the guilty apostates. Further on in this study we shall see that there are martyrs in the Great Tribulation, and there are those who are kept safely in it, as *e. g.*, 144,000 sealed ones (Rev. vii: 1-8), and the believers of Philadelphia (iii: 7-12). They are in the trial, but are safely guarded in it.

The conclusion is: The Seven Churches and the Messages addressed to them cover the whole church period, from the writing of the Apocalypse down to the final consummation, the Coming of the Lord. The three great septenary visions of the Seals, Trumpets and Vials also terminate in the final consummation. Each of them ends with the signal event of the book, the Coming of the Lord. But the difference between these four sets of sevens is very marked, and briefly is this: the Seven Churches embrace in their typical characteristics the entire dispensation lying between the apostolic age and the Second Advent. The visions of the Seals, Trumpets and Vials relate, in their full accomplishment, to the events which shall signalize the closing scenes of the age. These latter gather into a comparatively brief period of time just before Christ comes.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VISION OF HEAVEN OPENED, chaps. iv, v.

"After these things I saw, and behold a door opened in heaven," iv: 1, R. V. The phrase, "after these things," denotes apparently the transition from one vision to another (vii: 1, 9; xv: 5; xviii: 1; xix: 1). Even i: 19, held by many to be the division of the book, probably means the past, present and future as to visions, not the past, present and future of history, for much of chaps ii, iii relates to the future of the churches, not to the present alone. The phrase marks the succession of the visions and not of time. The last clause of iv: 1, "things which must be hereafter," is explained by Dan. ii: 28, 45. The visions of chaps. iv-vii: 1 appear to be denoted by it. (The Greek text of W. & H. and the margins of Eng. and Amer. revisions punctuate thus: "come to pass. After these things straightway," etc., which yields excellent sense.)

Grouped round about the resplendent central Throne, the Seer beheld four and twenty other thrones, lower, no doubt, upon which were seated four and twenty Elders clothed in white raiment, and on their heads crowns of gold. It is by no means easy to determine who, or what these Elders are. The majority of writers think they represent the redeemed of the Old and the New Testament epochs, twelve symbolizing one section, twelve the other of our race. There

are some who believe they may be princely leaders of the heavenly hosts of unfallen spirits in heavenly worship (Craven in Lange). The language employed respecting them, the language they themselves employ is quite remarkable. The text of Revelation agreed upon by the English and American Revisers, and the latest critical Greek text of Westcott and Hort, of Weymouth and Nestle (not to mention others), presents a significant divergence from that of King James. In the revised version of v: 9, we are bidden read thus: "Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood *men* of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them *to be* unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth." This was the "new song" sung by the Elders and the four living beings to the Lamb. They do not associate themselves with saved men in this hymn of praise; they actually appear to place themselves apart from the redeemed. In chap. vii: 9, 10, the unnumbered throng of the redeemed from among men sing their glad hossanah, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." But the Elders, and angels, and living beings do not join in it, they sing a different song from this of the saved. Moreover, one of the Elders said to John, "These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they?" He himself explains, vii: 13-15; but this explanation seems to set a wide distinction between himself and the white-robed company. Indeed, in every passage where the

voice of the Elders and of the four living beings is heard, they are not united with the redeemed (iv: 11; v: 12, xi: 17; xix: 4). The Elders are enthroned and crowned, but the souls of the martyrs—certainly the noblest portion of the redeemed—are seen beneath the altar, vi: 9-11, as if they were still in the state of martyrdom, their blood being at the altar's bottom like that of sacrificial victims. They are disembodied spirits, they have had as yet no resurrection nor reward. Accordingly, the Elders cannot be the totality of the redeemed already raised up and glorified, for here are saints still in the disembodied state, who are distinct from the Elders, and who are unglorified. And other martyrs are to follow these, vi: 11.

The best explanation of the vision of the Elders we have seen is by Dr. Swete, in his very recent commentary on the Apocalypse (1906-7), and it is embodied in this sentence: "The twenty-four Elders are the Church in its totality, but the Church idealized and, therefore, seen as already clad in white, crowned, and enthroned in the Divine Presence—a state yet future (*must be hereafter*), but already potentially realized in the resurrection and ascension of the Head, cf. Eph. ii: 6."

The four living creatures, iv: 6-8. "Beasts" of A. V. is most unfortunate as a translation, for these beings are neither brutes nor wild beasts like the two described in chap. xiii. These are distinguished for their vitality, their intense livingness, as their name (*zoa*) indicates, for their activity in the worship and service of God, and for their composite appearance.

They have the faces and forms of the lion, the calf, man, and the eagle—the recognized heads of the animal creation, “The four forms suggest what is noblest, strongest, wisest and swiftest in animate nature.” Their appearance seems to denote that they are the symbols, in some mysterious and profound way, of creation in its manifoldness and greatness. They closely resemble the Cherubim of Ezek. i; but there are marked differences. Those of Ezekiel are seen in the midst of an “infolding fire,” which has no parallel in Rev. iv. Ezekiel’s has each four wings; these of Rev. have six each. In this they approach the Seraphim of Isa. vi: 2. Both here and in Ezekiel they are associated with the throne of God. In chap. vi: 1-8, they are represented as in some sense the executors of the Divine Will; they summon the four riders with their authoritative *Come*. They appear to be connected with the providential judgments of God, are seen doing the behests of Him who is enthroned, about whom they stand as guards, or like a military staff. They are full of eyes, symbol of wondrous intelligence and sleepless vigilance.

What do they symbolize? Certainly not the Four Gospels, as some suppose; nor four great Apostles; as Peter, James, John, Paul; nor redeemed humanity. They may be symbols either of the Forces of Nature through which God’s will is accomplished, or *hieroglyphs* of certain chief attributes; as, righteousness, truth, power and mercy.

The Sealed Book and the Lamb, v: 1-14. The book which John saw was no ordinary roll. It rested on

the right hand of Him who sat on the Throne, as if held forth to be taken and opened. It was written both within and on the back; it was close sealed with seven seals. The solemn challenge by a strong angel rang out in heaven, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" No created being in the whole universe was able to look upon it, much less to open it. One alone was—One with the significant titles, "Lion of the tribe of Judah," "the Root of David," "the Lamb that was slain." It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is able to take the book, and to loose its seals. For His is the perfection of power; His seven horns denote it; His is the perfection of intelligence; His seven eyes are the proof; His perfect right to sovereignty and supremacy rests in this—He died and rose again; He is the Lamb that was slain. He "hath overcome (Gk. achieved the victory) to open the book and the seven seals thereof."

The meaning of this sublime vision is not far to seek. This chapter, as also the succeeding visions, indicates with unmistakable clearness the significance of the heavenly transaction. There is no hint that the book was read, that its contents were disclosed. We are told of the events which succeed the opening of the seals, but of the contents written within it nothing is said. Did the book contain the events? Doubtful. It would be unwarranted to affirm so much. The august transaction should be studied as a whole, not any particular feature of it.

Beyond all doubt the vision is of transcendent import. Men differ as to what it means and all it means.

The view that commends itself to the writer as being the most satisfactory is this: The Heavenly scene here described represents Christ's investiture of sovereign authority and rule as the rightful Governor of the world, the King and Lord of every realm and of every region. Supreme authority was conferred on Him at His exaltation (Matt. xxviii: 18; Eph. i: 20-23; Phil. ii: 9-11), but He did not at that time take full possession of all His rights and prerogatives; some He held in abeyance. He is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. i: 3; xii: 2; Rev. iii. 21 etc.). He is there as Mediator, conducting the vast and manifold interests of His redemptive work. But He is there also "expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet," Heb. x: 12, 13. The 2d and the 110th Psalms expressly teach that a day shall come when God will give to His Son the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession; when He will subdue them all under His feet; when He shall rule in the midst of His enemies, and judge among the nations. Peter affirms that the heavens must receive Christ until the times of restoration of all things (Acts iii: 20, 21). Scripture teaches that there comes a time in the prosecution of His work when Christ will take unto Himself His great power and will reign; when He will put down all authority and rule; when He will establish His glorious Kingdom in victorious power over the entire planet, and He alone will be the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. In this august scene that time has arrived. Christ takes the sealed

book out of the right hand of the Father. It is the "title-deed" to the inheritance which He has purchased by His obedience unto death, as the Elders and the Living Beings sing, v: 9: "Worthy art thou to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood," etc. The angelic hosts chant the like song: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (v: 12). Groaning creation now at length feels the first thrill of the promised deliverance, and sings its glad song of hope and expectation: "Unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever" (v: 13, 14). All created beings join in this glad song, for the redemption of the purchased possession has now at length come.

All these tuneful ascriptions of praise to the Lamb of God attest the profound significance of the heavenly transaction. A mighty change is here indicated in the mediatorial work of our Lord. Christ now at length in infinite majesty and power begins to recover the alienated inheritance, to clear it of every incumbrance, to put down every foe, to destroy all hostile forces, and to rule unchallenged over all. Hitherto He hath been seated at God's right hand, "expecting," Heb. x: 12. But in this vision He is seen standing before the Throne as if the appointed time has come, and the glorious Kingdom is now to be established, and the millennium be brought in. Accordingly, it is from

this point that the supreme prophetic action of the book begins its course, and it runs on to the final consummation. Chaps. iv, v, are thus introductory to and explanatory of all that follows, they are essential to any adequate understanding of the book.

Dan. vii: 9-14 points to the same great transaction recorded in Rev. v. One who is named "Ancient of Days" (God the Father) sits upon a Throne from which stream fiery flames, and about which stand thousands upon thousands of angelic hosts ministering unto Him. A secret judgment is pronounced on the Little Horn and the Beast, and the doom of both is irrevocably pronounced, vii: 9-12. Verses 13, 14, introduce a scene marvellously akin to that described in Rev. v: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him," cf. vers. 26, 27. The Son of Man, Jesus Christ, is here represented as coming into the place of judicature, and there receiving investiture of the everlasting Kingdom. His investiture immediately precedes His coming forth to crush the Beast, to annihilate the Antichrist (the Little Horn), and His taking the Kingdom for the saints of the Most High. This vision in Daniel appears to be exactly parallel with that of John.

The parable of the Nobleman (Luke xix: 11-27) points to the same supreme event as the vision of Dan-

iel. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return . . . And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom," etc. No one can question that the Nobleman represents Christ Himself. The far country to which He went is heaven. The kingdom He went to receive is the same glorious kingdom predicted in Dan. vii, "a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages should serve him." The parable teaches that this kingdom shall come to victorious power over all the earth, when the King Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall "return." The words, "having received the kingdom," seem to denote His investiture of the kingdom, His right and title to take it, and to establish His sovereign rule over the world.

We conclude, therefore, that this majestic scene so graphically portrayed in Rev. v, when the Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, receives investiture of the kingdom, has not yet taken place. The proof of this statement is twofold: (a) the successive opening of the seven Seals is connected with the Coming of the Lord at the time of the End. The sixth and the seventh Seals make this absolutely certain. No time seems to elapse between taking the book and opening the Seals. Upon taking the book He at once proceeds to open its Seals. But the opening of the Seals ushers in the "signs" which immediately precede the Advent, Rev. vi: 12-17; viii: 5; Matt. xxiv: 29-31; Mar. xiii: 24-27; Lu. xxi: 25-28.

(b) Both Daniel (vii) and the Lord (Lu. xix) connect the triumphant establishment of the Kingdom over all the world with Christ's Coming. Hence, the investiture immediately precedes the Advent.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS, vi-viii: 1-5.

Mighty movements on earth follow the successive breaking of the Seals. At the repeated cry of the Living Creatures, Come, four horsemen in rapid succession set forth on their mission. Each is distinguished from the others by the color of his horse and by what he carries. The first rider has a bow, his horse is white, and to him as an unfailing conqueror a crown is given. He is a victorious, military chieftain. The second carries a great sword, his horse is red, and it is given him to take peace from the earth. He is the personification of war. The third rides a black horse, and bears a pair of ballances. He prefigures famine, scarcity, though it is not altogether total. The fourth rider is Death, and Hades as a devouring demon follows at his heels; his horse is pale, and he has power to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death (or pestilence), and with the wild beasts.

What do these strange, mystic horsemen signify? What do they represent? Of course they are symbolic, and must be so understood, but they are intended to picture a dread reality; they are to have their realization in historical time. To interpret it as a vision of the victorious Christ by His Gospel subduing the world is totally inappropriate, for the whole

series of horsemen, as well as the other Seals, are connected with war, bloodshed, famine, pestilence, and death. This cannot be the image of the gracious Prince of Peace sending forth by His messengers the Gospel of His grace. Rather we have here a picture of triumphant militarism. Matt. xxiv: 5-14 brings no little aid to the understanding of this vision. Our Lord tells us that there shall come false Christs (the first rider amazingly resembles a mock Messiah), and there shall be wars, and famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes, nations shall be in commotion and revolution, and God's people shall suffer tribulation and martyrdom—an event connecting at once with the opening of the fifth Seal (ver. 9). "But the end is not yet;" "these are the beginning of sorrows."

These verses of the Olivet Prophecy seem to belong to the time of Jerusalem's overthrow, A. D. 70, as Luke reporting the same Discourse of the Lord plainly says, Lu. xxi: 8-20. There can be no doubt that the Lord Jesus had in mind the troublous times that preceded and accompanied the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus, the horrible sufferings then endured by uncounted multitudes of Jews, and afflictions and slaughter of His own disciples, as the book of the Acts, and the later Epistles of Paul, and those of Peter, and Jude abundantly attest. But do those events, can they exhaust His predictions? Did wars, famines, pestilences, false prophets and false Messiahs end with the destruction of the holy city of Israel? No one would be so foolish as to assert it. The like things, in a little less than seventy

years after, reappeared in the rebellion of the imposter, Bar-Cochba, who, with his following, was overthrown by the Emperor Hadrian, Jerusalem was laid in heaps, and its ruins sown with salt. In almost every century since the like commotions, and disturbances, and bloodshed have been repeated. It must be borne in mind that two prime objects were before our Lord's mind when He predicted the events of Matt. xxiv, viz.: Jerusalem's ruin and His Second Coming. The one object glides into the other, both events have some things which precede them in common. His prophecy is a *double one*, applying both to Jerusalem and His Advent. Accordingly, we believe that before He comes to earth again, and, perhaps, not long before, the like things that presaged Jerusalem's destruction will announce in the most solemn fashion the nearness of His appearing. History repeats itself. Our age, the Gospel age, began at Jerusalem; prophetic Scripture appears to testify that it will terminate there.

If the right interpretation has been given to the Lamb's taking the Book from the hand of Him who sat on the throne and opening its Seals, then the action of the four riders does not relate to Jerusalem's desolation, nor to the suffering then endured. The action of the horsemen belongs to the time of the End, to the last mighty conflict between the Son of Man and the hostile powers of the world. When these riders start forth portentous movements are afield; the forces are marching and massing for the final struggle. We think they go forth before Daniel's

Seventieth Week begins its course. They clear the way for the monster Beast and his ten confederate kings. A heavenly mandate seems to summon them, and providence permits them to work their will, for restraints will then be withdrawn and the forces of the End-time will do as they list. The Living Beings that call them out are intimately associated with the Throne of God and its decrees, Rom. ix: 28.

The fifth Seal is the martyr Seal, vi: 9-11. The Seer saw "under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Their blood had been poured out like that of sacrificial victims at the altar's bottom. They were slain for the same cause that banished John to the desolate Patmos, i: 9; "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." They were Christian martyrs no less than was John a Christian sufferer. It is held that these martyrs do not pertain to the Church, for their cry, "How long, O, Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"—indicates they are on other ground than Christian. This view is maintained mainly to save the theory that the Rapture of the Church occurs at the opening of the fourth chapter of our book, and as this scene is subsequent thereto, these martyrs are not of the Body. But almost precisely the same language is employed by our Lord in Luke xviii: 7, "And shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" It would be presumptuous to deny the application of these words

to Christians. The context settles that matter. The method of interpretation which deftly puts an inconvenient text out of the way so as to save the view is perilously close to that of the rationalist who says of Scripture that cuts across his theory, "It is spurious," "an interpolation," "it don't apply." Why try to rob these martyrs of their heritage? If they are not members of the Body, neither is John, for he and they stand precisely on the same ground, suffer for the same reason—"the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." All the Seals pertain to the time just before Christ's Advent.

The martyrdom of these saints post-dates the summons to the four horsemen. For aught told us to the contrary, they were slain by the order of these riders. Persecution, no doubt, deepens and intensifies through the sanguinary and cruel action of the horsemen. Hence, other martyrs are to follow them. These must wait till their brethren have been put to death before God will execute judgment on their murderers. This fact, as already intimated, obviously links these sufferers with all who succeed them, including no doubt those of the Great Tribulation itself.

These and all other martyrs of Christ will have a triumphant vindication in due time, cf. xi: 18. They will be raised up, and will live and reign with Christ a thousand years, xx: 4, 5. "This is the first resurrection." So the Spirit of God witnesses. No resurrection of saint or martyr takes place before this, else it could not by any possibility be called "the first resurrection." It occurs when Christ returns to earth

in visible majesty and overwhelming power and glory, as chap. xix: 11-21 so graphically reveals. As we read it, the Apocalypse has no other resurrection, knows no other resurrection than this "first."

The opening of the sixth Seal is succeeded by extraordinary convulsions of nature and universal consternation of men, vi: 12-17. These are the "signs" which immediately precede the Advent of Christ. It is "the Day of the Lord," the Day of most appalling phenomena, as the prophets testify, cf. Isa. xiii: 9, 10; Joel ii: 30, 31; iii: 14-16; Zeph. i: 14-18; Zech. xiv: 6, 7, etc. The signs are the precursor of the visible appearing of Jesus Christ. They precede the actual Coming by the briefest space of time, and they immediately follow the Great Tribulation. Our Lord foretells this "sign-time" in graphic terms, Matt. xxiv: 29; Luke xxi: 25-28. Nothing in the world's history has yet happened which on any fair principle of interpretation even approaches the fulfilment of the contents of this sixth Seal. The conversion of Constantine, the fall of the Roman Empire, the irruption of the Barbarians, the French Revolution—not one of these events, nor all of them combined, are anywhere near an accomplishment of the "signs," else, as one tersely puts it, "the majesty of the prediction is lost in the poverty of its fulfilment."

The opening of the seventh Seal is the consummation, viii: 1, 5.

THE EPISODE OF THE SEALED AND THE SAVED, chap. vii.

As already noted, this episode is introduced between the sixth and the seventh Seals. But the time covered by it is certainly more than the brief space which lies between the "sign-time" and the Advent. It appears to us that it stretches over the period between the first and the last of the Seals. The world movements and the activities of the great adversary are shown us in the first five Seals; the episode discloses to us God's activities and mercies in grace in this same period. First, 144,000 of Israel's tribes are sealed with the seal of God (cf. Ezek. ix). They are Jews, the seed of Abraham, for they stand in sharp contrast with the saved from among the Gentiles, vs. 9-17. Two companies, quite distinct from one another, are here brought to view, viz.: the 144,000 ($12^2 \times 1,000$) sealed out of Israel, and the innumerable hosts gathered from among the nations, v: 9. The purpose of the sealing is to secure these chosen Hebrews against the wrath which is about to be poured out on the ungodly. Hence, the four angels standing on earth's "four corners" are bidden to hold back the judgments until these are safe under the seal of God. The same company appears under the sounding of the fifth Trumpet, and they are preserved from its desolation because they have as here in the episode the seal of God in their foreheads (ix: 4). It is difficult to locate the time of the sealing, but it seems almost certain it belongs to a point before the Tribulation begins, for these believing Jews are no

doubt the fruit of the testimony of the Two Witnesses (xi), and if so, their sealing belongs to the time of the four riders (vi:1-8).

Second, an innumerable host of saved Gentiles are seen in glory, before the throne of God, clad in white raiment, with palm branches in their hands. They have come to their place of bliss through the "great tribulation" (the Greek is most emphatic, "the tribulation the great one"). It is one of unprecedented trouble, of unparalleled suffering. Daniel speaks of it as a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Dan. xii: 1). Jeremiah also, "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. xxx: 7). Christ likewise, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now; no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. xxiv: 21). Never yet has this tribulation, so unequalled in intensity and awfulness taken place. It is still future, but as seen in this vision the saved have passed through it, and are now in glory. The sealed 144,000 seem to have been preserved through it, sheltered from its dreadfulness by the seal of God.

It is the judgment of trustworthy interpreters of prophecy that the last or Seventieth Week of Daniel's mystic Seventy has never yet run its course in human history, Dan. ix: 24-27. It still belongs to the future. The Week consists of seven years of literal time. The prophets divide it into two equal parts of three and one-half years each, Dan. vii: 25; xii: 7; Rev. xii: 14.

Each half of the Week is also spoken of as forty-two months, Rev. xi: 2; xiii: 5, and as 1,260 days, Rev. xi: 3; xii: 6. The following diagram may serve to illustrate the divided Week:

DANIEL'S SEVENTIETH WEEK—SEVEN YEARS.

3½ years, Dan. xii: 7.	3½ years, Rev. xii: 14.
42 months, Rev. xi: 2.	42 months, Rev. xiii: 5.
1,260 days, Rev. xi: 3.	1,260 days, Rev. xii: 6.

The numbers of each half of the Week, though expressed in years, months, and days, designate the same period—three and a half years twice over, seven years in all. We believe this to be literal time.

The world's crisis, the culmination of evil, the tremendous judgments of God, the First Resurrection and the inauguration of the Millennium are all narrowed into the compass of these seven years of time. Israel's age-long exile and suffering will then terminate in their restoration to God, and their reinstatement in the divine favor, nevermore to be rejected and cast off. But these seven years will mark momentous events, unexampled suffering, colossal wickedness, and the wrath of God poured out to the uttermost.

It is difficult, if not impossible, accurately to say just what events will take place in each part of this divided Week, these seven years. It must be kept in mind that the outburst of godlessness, which will then reach its climax, has had a gradual development, has

long been gathering force and ripening. As an ancient writer expresses it, "The road is long in preparing, but the end of it is sudden and swift." It is quite possible that the first four Seals lie before the Seven Years begin their course. The fifth Seal belongs in part to each half, for there will no doubt be martyrs, both in the one and in the other. There is little doubt but that the Two Witnesses (Rev. xi) testify during the first half of the Week, and die before the events of the second half begin their course. The Tribulation is certainly in the second half. The Beast appears in the first half when he slays the Witnesses; he comes to the summit of his bad pre-eminence in the second. Israel is in both halves, as also are Gentile believers. There will be a martyred remnant of Israel, and also a spared remnant. It is the spared remnant that is sealed and kept during the time of trouble. The unnumbered throng of Gentile martyrs are in this episode seen in glory: resurrection accordingly for them is here prospectively accomplished. There will also be a sheltered remnant of Gentile saints, Rev. iii: 10.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS, viii: 6—xi: 18.

Like the Vials, the Trumpets are judicial; they inflict judgment on the wicked and the ungodly of the time of the end. The first four smite, not guilty man directly, but certain objects of nature which are essential to man's well-being. The first strikes vegetation; the second the sea; the third the rivers and fountains of waters; the fourth the sun, moon, and stars. These beneficent powers of nature, on which man is so dependent for his well-being, are stripped of one-third of their energy under the judgments of God. Through nature God chastises the ungodly. If they should bow to His rod and repent, no doubt the judgments would be removed. But the two Woe Trumpets which deal directly with men, and inflict on them the heaviest punishments, prove they do not repent, they grew worse and worse (ix: 20, 21). The Trumpets do not begin to sound at the same point where the Seals begin. The first Trumpet apparently starts where the third Seal ends and the fourth begins. They all, however, terminate at the same point—the consummation.

The fifth Trumpet (ix: 1-11; 1st Woe) brings a fearful scourge upon the earth. It seems to involve all men and nature in its sweep. There are two exemptions, however, the "locusts" from the smoke of

the pit must not hurt vegetation, nor touch the men who had the seal of God in their forehead, ver. 4. On the others the blow falls with utmost violence, and with crushing effect, so that the guilty sufferers seek death and do not find it, death flies from them. The torture lasts for five months.

The historical interpreters find the fulfilment of this vision of the scorpion-like locusts in the Saracen armies, the Fallen Star being their prophet, Mohammed. Others regard these scourges as the armies of heretics and infidels; others still, as swarms of demons let loose on the guilty world, their king and leader being no other than the devil himself. Not one of these interpretations is satisfactory. That of the historical school has historical ground for it. There is a remarkable parallelism between the prediction here and the rise and progress of Islam. Even William Kelly, a staunch futurist, does not shrink from saying, "I do not doubt that the common *application* of the locusts to the Saracens, and of the Euphratean horsemen to the Turks is well founded." The difficulty lies in this, the Woe Trumpets sound at the time of the end, in Daniel's Seventieth Week, and hence events which occurred a thousand years ago cannot possibly exhaust this mighty prophecy. They adumbrate it, but are not its complete fulfilment.

The following explanation of this vision is deferentially submitted. The key to its meaning is found in the phrase of ver. 4, "men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads." Those who have that seal are exempt from the judgment which now

falls. The reference must be to the 144,000 sealed of vii: 1-8. They are Hebrews, and the seal shields them from the "torment" of the invading army here foretold. At the time of the vision Israel in large numbers is back in the Land; most of them are unbelieving, some of them have become the true people of God. These are protected, those are exposed to the fury of the invading host. That host, it is believed, is identical with Ezekiel's Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, Ezek. xxxviii: lxxxix; Joel ii. Ezekiel's prophecy locates the time "in that day," xxxviii: 10, 14, "when my people Israel dwelleth securely." In Joel it is the Day of the Lord, ii: 1. In Joel the army resembles locusts in the suddenness of their appearance, their countless numbers, their irresistible progress, and their insatiable rapacity. But they do not prey on the sealed of God, they do not touch earth's vegetation, they smite the unbelieving among men. It is quite possible Russia will have the chief part in this invasion, but she will not be alone in it. Swarms of other peoples will also engage in it, as Ezekiel clearly announces. All these invaders, this huge host of Gog, will be animated by a satanic spirit, and will be filled with the fury of demons. They bring with them the smoke of the Pit. The plague is of but short duration, it lasts but five months, ix: 5.

The sixth Trumpet, vision of the Euphratean Horsemen, ix: 13-21. This is the second of the Woe Trumpets, and, like the first, it must be one of calamity. Such it assuredly is. By this countless army of 200,-

000,000, ver. 16, the third part of men are killed. No exemption of the sealed of God is made, nor of earth's productions, as in the case of the other Woe; the terrific judgment here falls with merciless force. The language of course is symbolical. The four angels, "bound" perhaps, mean the providential restraints of armed forces from the East. The Euphrates connects the thought with Babylon, and Babylon is directly associated with the Beast, chap. xvii. It may, therefore, be that it is the imperial army of the Antichrist, provoked by the coming into Palestine of the king of the North with his hordes, as the prophets reveal (Ezek. xxxviii: 6, 15; Dan. xi: 40; Joel ii: 20). Daniel, in chap. xi: 40-45, predicts the invasion of Palestine by the wilful king (the Beast or Antichrist), and the attack on him by the kings of the north and the south, and apparently the king's victory over those combined forces. Or it may be that this vast army (we think the number 200,000,000 is ideal, not literal, denoting an extraordinary large army) will consist mainly of Mohammedans, who in that day will combine against the Wilful King, who will then be seeking the subjugation of the whole earth. Surely that dreadful scourge of the ages, Mohammedanism, will hold a conspicuous place in the scenes of the last days. Its dark record of despotism, desolation, ravage and slaughter, will, possibly, end with one supreme effort to regain its vanishing power and its lost territories. But certainty as to the full significance of this vision of the Euphratean army is at present unattainable. The historical in-

terpreters find its fulfilment in the invasion of western Asia by the Turks, which resulted in the capture of Constantinople (A. D. 1453). There is a remarkable parallelism between the prediction as thus viewed and the historical facts. It can hardly be doubted but that it then received a partial and anticipatory accomplishment. But the vision belongs specifically to the time of the end. It may be that *then* Islam will put forth its last and most vigorous exertion to preserve its existence, and thus fulfil this vision.

The locust-like army of the fifth Trumpet torment men with their sting. The Euphratean horsemen kill the third part of men. The scourge lasts for a definite period; namely, "the hour, and day, and month, and year." Its beginning, duration, and end are fixed by divine decree. That this great army is *human*, and not a countless multitude of evil spirits as some think, seems to us certain. It must be constantly borne in mind that the movements of nations and of men in the last times will be on a scale of vastness almost beyond what we can now conceive. Prophecy appears to involve the whole world in the revolutions and convulsions of those days.

The third Woe Trumpet, xi: 15-19—the seventh and last. Heavenly voices announce, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever," xi: 15, R. V. The world-kingdom has now become the Lord's, so the words signify. Obviously, this is the final consummation, the End. Accordingly, the twenty-four Elders say, "Thou hast taken thy

great power and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth," vers. 16-18. This language unmistakably denotes the time of the End. It is very notable. (1) The rage of the nations, (2) God's wrath visited upon them, (3) resurrection and vindication of the saints, (4) distribution of rewards among God's people, (5) overthrow of earth's destroyers. We do not think that the wicked share in this resurrection. The term "Judged" means to judge with the purpose of vindication, and the dead thus judged are described as exclusively belonging to God. There is no hint here of the presence of the wicked dead. The righteous alone are here, to whom the blessed Judge gives His gracious rewards. The seventh Trumpet is the last and the resurrection trumpet, 1 Cor. xv: 52.

The words of the Elders are noteworthy, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast," xi: 17. The clause "and art to come" is omitted in the Revisions, and in all the late critical Greek texts (Alford, Wescott & Hort, Weymouth, and Nestle). In i: 4, 8, ; iv: 8, the ascription is, "Who was, and who is, and who is to come," or "who cometh." But here in xi: 17 the final clause is omitted, "who cometh." Why? Manifestly because the Lord actually comes when the seventh

Trumpet sounds. In iv: 8 He has not come, He is still the coming One.

THE EPISODE, chaps. x-xi: 14.

This episode, like that of the Seals, is interposed between the sixth and the seventh Trumpet. Space will allow but brief remarks on three subjects in these chapters. (1.) The Oath of the Angel and his solemn proclamation, x: 5-7. His imposing attitude, his uplifted right hand, and his appeal to Him who is the Living One, attest the momentousness and truth of his announcement, "There shall be no longer delay." Not that time is then to end and eternity begin, but that God will now at length interpose and put an end to the lawlessness and the crimes of the world. The angel asserts that this interposition will take place at the sounding of the seventh Trumpet; then the mystery of God will be finished—the secret of His letting His foes have their own way and of letting the bad triumph and the good be trodden underfoot. All this will terminate with the 7th Trumpet, xi: 1-18.

(2.) The temple and the holy city, xi: 1, 2. These certainly cannot be the heavenly temple and city, nor the Christian church. For "the court" is cast out as unholy and polluted. No chronological scheme can be devised for the past or the present that will give 42 months of desolation either for the church or the earthly Jerusalem. The two Witnesses have never yet appeared in connection with Jerusalem and the Jews; but the temple, the city and the testimony of

the witnesses are certainly connected with the land of Palestine, and particularly with Jerusalem. Nor has the Beast appeared, nor have the witnesses been slain by him. Accordingly, it seems to us that beyond peradventure what is foretold in this episode belongs to the future, and the scenes and events announced in it will take place in the days of the Seals, the Trumpets and Vials, *i. e.*, at the End.

(3.) The Two Witnesses, xi: 3-13. God will never leave Himself without a witness even in the dreadful times of the End. Before the final deliverance arrives for Israel two Witnesses will testify for God in the midst of Jerusalem, and miraculous powers will once more be exhibited among the chosen people. We are not told who these Witnesses are nor whence. The account given of them is brief but rich in suggestion. They are clothed in sackcloth, emblem of humiliation and of affliction; their ministry is one of appeal and denunciation, hence calculated to arouse antagonism. "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth" (cf. Zech. iv: 3, 11, 14). They are anointed for an extraordinary work, and they are endued with supernatural power to execute it. They can shut heaven, and they can smite men. Their ministry lasts for 1260 days, *i. e.*, three and a half years, when they are slain by the Beast, and their bodies are refused burial. How bitter must be the hostility against them! After three and a half days they are raised up, and summoned to heaven by a "great voice," "Come up hither!"

Are these witnesses two individual men? So the passage appears to teach. Many, however, think they represent two companies of witnesses, at the head of which two men stand as chief. Even some staunch futurists, as James Smith and William Kelly, incline to this view. The majority believe that they are in reality but two individual men. Some suppose they are Enoch and Elijah; others, Moses and Elijah. The only evidence in support of the opinion is the miracles wrought by them are closely akin to those of Moses and Elijah. Beyond this there is not a hint that they are sent to earth from the unseen world. It is extremely improbable that these saints, after centuries of bliss in heaven, should be dispatched to earth to bear witness to Jews and Gentiles. The passage does not require such an interpretation. All it demands is, that the witnesses be invested with supernatural authority and with miraculous power. John the Baptist is an analogous instance of such witness-bearing. He came in the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Lu. i: 17). Jesus said of him—"That Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed" (Matt. xvii: 12). But John was not Elijah. He might have done all predicted of Elijah had the Jews received him and his testimony (Matt. xi: 14). If two men shall appear in the last days, as these two assuredly will, and bear the witness of God to rebellious men in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah, the terms of this prophecy will be met.

The historical interpretators cite a striking instance

of the accomplishment of xi: 3-13, according to their method of exposition. In A. D. 1512-17 the Fifth Lateran Council was held in Rome. A papal bull was issued in December, 1513, which commanded all dissidents from papal authority to appear in due time before the Council, and show cause for their refusal to acknowledge the pope's supremacy. When the time appointed arrived to hear such cause, no answer to Leo's summons appeared. The orator of that session (May, 1514) uttered, amidst the applause of the Council, the memorable exclamation, "There is an end of resistance to the papal rule and religion; opposers exist no more!" Evangelical testimony was hushed! Three years and a half later, almost to a day (October, 1517) Luther nailed his theses to the Wittenberg church-door! It looks much as if the witnesses were indeed slain, but they gloriously revive in the power of the great Reformation. We have no good reason to reject this application of the prophecy as a partial and proleptic fulfilment. But it does not meet all the facts. The witnesses beyond question prosecute their ministry in Jerusalem, and there they are slain, xi: 8. Besides, the Beast, it seems to us, cannot be merely a corrupt and apostate ecclesiastical system like Popery; he comes from the "abyss;" he is, or seems to be, a man, not only an organization such as Romanism is. Furthermore, the witnesses appear just before the seventh Trumpet sounds when the consummation is reached and the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, comes and establishes His Kingdom over the world.

Apparently the ministry of the two witnesses ends

in total failure. But the failure is only apparent. The most blessed results follow the testimony which brought them to martyrdom. We have no doubt that the conversion of Israel's remnant of sealed ones (vii: 1-8) is the glorious issue of their work as the following chapters appear to indicate.

CHAPTER X.

THE INTERCALATED VISIONS, chaps. xii, xiii, xiv.

With this great section the student is confronted by some of the most intricate and perplexing problems of the Apocalypse. Help from books of a substantial sort is painfully meagre. The more one reads the less certainty he has as to its meaning. Happy he who catches glimpses of the massive truth hidden behind the stupendous imagery of this section of Revelation! Let it be ours to cautiously thread our way through the intricacies of these chapters, seeking to grasp only the prominent things signified in them and passing by details of exposition.

Chap. xii has two "signs"—a sun-clothed Woman and a great, red dragon. Our first inquiry relates to this "sign" of the Woman. Who is she? What does she represent? The conjectures of writers are multitudinous and generally contradictory. We need not burden the page with enumerating them. We assume that she is not the Virgin Mary, for the history of our Saviour's mother does not correspond with what is told us of this sun-clothed woman. She is not the Christian Church, for in no proper or adequate sense can we affirm that she gives birth to the Man-Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and who was caught up to the throne of God. It is by Messiah the Church is born, certainly not by

the Church Messiah becomes incarnate. The Church in all ages and generations is composed of members who are brought into it by the Spirit of God, and one by one, individually. The Woman here gives birth to one majestic and glorious Son; the event is consummated at once, not prolonged through ages, as is the case with the Christian Church, and even with the Jewish Church.

We believe that the key to the significance of this great "sign" is found in the 19th verse of the preceding chapter. After the seventh Trumpet has sounded and the consummation is at length come, the Seer goes back and starts once more with a fresh vision, which leads him into the marvellous revelations contained in these chapters. In xi: 19 we read: "And the temple (sanctuary) of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of the covenant." This is strictly Jewish ground; the temple, the ark, the covenant belong to Israel, represent Hebrew relations with God and Hebrew privileges. The Spirit now takes up Jewish things, Jewish standing, covenant, hopes, dangers, tribulations and triumph. The verse connects with what follows, is introductory to it—is explanatory also. The Man-Child is certainly the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman is not a literal female; she is the symbol of the Messianic nation, the Daughter of Zion; for through her, Israel, Christ was given to the world (Rom. ix: 5). But the prophet is not here tracing Israel's history, nor that of Israel's Messiah; this is not his theme. In a magnificent picture he sets forth Israel's connection with

Messiah, first, in His incarnation, and second, the conversion of the first instalment, the firstfruits of the chosen people to God, vii: 1-8; xiv: 1-5. The chapter touches the first Advent, then sketches the events that pertain to the time of the second Advent.

The Dragon is the old Serpent, the Devil and Satan, xii: 9. Full of hatred against the Woman, Israel, whom he has never ceased to persecute, whose Son he sought to slay at Bethlehem, he now appears in his last disguise. He is seen as a huge Dragon, half serpent and half wild beast, with seven crowned heads and ten horns. His outward form links him at once with the revived World Empire, as chap. xiii unmistakably proves. Neither Rome pagan or papal ever had such disguise; never yet has appeared a power with seven heads and ten horns, or with what this symbol portrays. Beyond question the apparition of this monster, energized as he will be by the Devil, belongs to the future. An event of worldwide import precedes or accompanies the appearing of the seven-headed monster on earth. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out," xii: 7-9, Cf. Dan. xii: 1, 2. Immediately upon the dejection of the great adversary from "heaven" to earth a shout of gladness rings through heaven, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them be-

fore our God day and night," ver. 10. The ground of Satan's accusation is human unfaithfulness, unbelief; in Israel's case, apostasy. So long as the Jews remain obdurate and apostate from God and from His Messiah, so long the enemy holds his vantage ground. But what is it which brings about his dejection? In Dan. xii: 1 it is Michael who "stands up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people" (Daniel's people). In Rev. xii: 7, 8 it is likewise Michael fighting against the dragon and overcoming him. But more is told us: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." These are saints on earth who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, who receive Him as Saviour, and who bear faithful witness to Him in the midst of trial and affliction. They are Jewish believers, and their conversion seems to synchronize with the "war in heaven."

The words of other prophets confirm and explain these symbolic pictures. Micah predicts the first advent of the Redeemer, then foretells Israel's rejection and restoration: "Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel" (v: 2, 3). Isaiah speaks of the same event: "Before she travailed she brought forth; before her pain came she was delivered of a man-child. Shall a nation be born in one day? For as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children" (lxvi: 7, 8). Israel's conversion, even as to

the "firstfruits," the 144,000 of sealed ones, as we think is here specially meant, precipitates the crisis. Satan, cast down from his high place of accusation, rages on earth, persecutes the Woman and goes to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus, xii: 17.

According to Daniel, when Michael "stands up" for Israel, the time of unprecedented trouble begins (xii: 1, 2). According to John, when saints overcome the Dragon because of the blood of the Lamb and of the word of their testimony, the seven-headed and ten-horned Foe furiously assails the Woman and the remnant of her seed who believe. It is the opening of the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob's "trouble." But if the Dragon is busy God is even busier. If the one determines the annihilation of the Woman, the Other determines to save her. And so she is given two wings of a great eagle whereby she flies into the wilderness, where God has provided for her a place of safety and of nourishment during the whole period of the Tribulation, three and a half years. The flight is from Jerusalem and Judea; it is also from the deadly wrath of the Beast, the Anti-christ, Satan's agent and tool. It is, we do not doubt, the sealed company of believing Israelites, the 144,000 of chap. vii and chap. xiv, who flee for safety. God provides for their safety.

John is not alone in this prediction. Other prophets refer to the same event. Thus Zechariah announces that the nations shall be gathered together

against Jerusalem, that the city shall be taken and plundered, that half its population shall go into captivity, but "the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." God in a most marvellous manner will interpose in behalf of His suffering remnant, and will cleave out of the mountain of Olives a valley of escape; and the prophet adds: "And ye shall flee by the valley of my mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azel: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah; and Jehovah my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee," Zech. xiv: 1-5. Daniel (xi: 41) declares that "the King," the Antichrist, will be prevented from taking Edom, Moab, and Ammon. All other lands will fall under his victorious arms. These shall escape. May it be that it is to this rocky, almost inaccessible territory the saved remnant will flee? Cf. *Psa.* lx: 9-11.

Foiled in the effort to destroy the Woman, the furious Dragon turns his rage against the rest of her seed who "keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus," xii: 17. These are believing Jews, and seem to constitute the martyred remnant of the Tribulation. Believing Gentiles will also suffer; perhaps the countless throng of vii: 9-14.

The sum of the teaching of this profound and difficult vision we conceive to be the following:

1. The Sun-clothed Woman is Israel, the Daughter of Zion, seen mainly in the time of the End. She is the Messianic Mother.
2. The Dragon is the Devil, disguised in his last,

his most effective, and yet most hideous mask he has ever worn.

3. "War in heaven" describes Satan's expulsion from his place of eminence and power, and the crisis of the world immediately ensues.

4. Security of the mystic Woman, Israel's sealed company.

5. War against the Woman's seed, Israel's martyred remnant.

6. Martyrdom of the countless throng of Gentile believers, vii: 9-14.

The conversion of Israel's "firstfruits," the sealed company of 144,000, and the dejection of the old Serpent from heaven synchronize. It is this conversion of Israel's sealed and martyred remnants which destroys the devil's ground of accusation against the saints, and forshortens the period of his malignant activity; but it intensifies his rage.

THE TWO WILD BEASTS, Chap. xiii.

"And he stood upon the sand of the sea" (xiii: 1 R. V.). It is the Dragon that thus stands by the seashore. Defeated in his efforts to "drown" the Woman (xii: 15, 16), *i. e.*, Israel's newly converted "firstfruits," Satan now calls into action his two agents and allies, the Beast and the False Prophet. Out of the sea the first wild beast rises (cf. Dan. vii: 2). The sea torn by the winds is the lively image of nations and peoples in commotion and revolution. It is out of a disrupted condition of civil society this huge

Beast comes into being. It is out of such a state imperialism always originates. By these two formidable agents, the reorganized imperial World-sovereignty and the False Prophet, the devil will make war against the Woman's seed, seek to destroy Israel, and so thwart the gracious purposes of the Son of God.

The Beast from the sea is the heir and successor of Daniel's four, which are symbols of successive empires or kingdoms (Dan. vii: 17, 23)—the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian, and Roman. This is evident from the composition of John's great symbol. The lion, the bear, the leopard, and the ten-horned monster, each distinct in Daniel, are all united in one in John's, xiii: 2. He has seven heads and ten horns with ten diadems on his horns. The great red dragon of xii: 3 has the same number of heads and horns. Are there, then, two separate powers, the Dragon and the Beast, in the field of action at the same time? Certainly not. When first seen by John in his vision, the Dragon has the symbolic form of the Beast; he has seven heads and ten horns; but he transfers his "power, and his throne, and great authority" (xiii: 2) to his ungodly agent. It is through this new force the devil will exert all his energy and vent all his rage.

The seven heads represent seven kings or kingdoms (Dan. vii: 17, 23; Rev. xvii: 10). Five of them had fallen when John wrote, the sixth, the Roman Empire, was then dominant over most of earth. A seventh kingdom, universal in its sway and altogether satanic in its origin and character, was to come and was to

endure for a short space, Rev. xvii: 10. One of the heads, presumably the sixth, the Roman, was seen wounded unto death. It fell beneath the victorious swords of the so-called Barbarians, the Goths, Vandals, Huns, and other foes, and it ceased to be. But it is to be restored to life; the Seer adds, it "shall come," or, as the Sinai MS. expressively reads, "it shall be present again." A worldwide sovereignty, energized by Satan and his most obedient tool, is yet to arise. We hold that these seven heads or empires of the Beast from the sea are not seven forms of rule of the Roman State, as many writers affirm; *e. g.*, kings, consuls, decemvirs, military tribunes, dictators, emperors. They are successive empires; they stand for those world-powers that have been the oppressors and persecutors of God's people. We believe they symbolize the following kingdoms: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. This view is confirmed by the fact that in John's huge Beast all the characteristic features of Daniel's four Brutes are found (cf. Dan. vii: 1-7; Rev. xiii: 2). These six Powers have long since disappeared. No world-sovereignty has there been since the fall of the Roman Empire. Ambitious soldiers like Charlemagne and the first Napoleon have attempted the formation of one universal government with himself at its head; but they have utterly failed. Prophecy distinctly announces that one vast united kingdom shall yet arise. It will come at the time of the end of the age. It will consist of ten confederated kingdoms, each ruled over by a king. So much the ten "horns" signify, xvii:

12. On the Dragon's heads John saw diadems. But when the Beast from the sea shall appear the diadems are transferred to the ten "horns," or ten kings, who rule in unison with the imperial head. In chap. xvii: 13, 14 we are told "they receive authority, with the beast, for one hour." "One hour" certainly does not denote mere time, a space of sixty minutes, but one and the same time. They enter into a close alliance with the Beast at one and the same time, and he and they thereby constitute in their united capacity the vast federation, the consolidated world-empire of the last days. These ten kings "give their power and their strength unto the Beast." On a worldwide scale there will then be constituted the *United States* of the prophetic earth. Such a form of government on so vast a scale has never yet been seen. But God's word solemnly predicts that there shall be. As a personal belief we may add that it will have for its center and its seat the nations of Europe, particularly those grouped around the Mediterranean sea. Out of the present European state system the coming federated Empire will be formed, though it will not be confined to these. That there are tendencies now discernible for such an international union no thoughtful person can fail to see. Our age is pre-eminently a federating age. For years the "triple Alliance" of Germany, Austria and Italy has existed. France, Spain and Great Britain stand together in support of certain Continental issues. Russia, the United States (for our country is tending manifestly toward the place and the obligations of a world-power), and even Japan of the far East, all

seem to be gravitating toward a common cause and common center. The formation of a confederate, universal sovereignty, such as prophecy clearly indicates, is not only possible, but it may be realized in few years from now.

At the head of this huge organization will stand the peerless man, the Satan-inspired man, the man in military genius and executive capacity, in intellectual brilliancy and savage ferocity, surpassing all other men. He and the Empire over which he shall rule are so thoroughly identified in the prophetic revelation as that they receive the same descriptive title, the awful name—The Beast! Three inspired prophets, Daniel, Paul and John, furnish a full description of the powers, action and end of this coming man. In Daniel he has “eyes like the eyes of a man,” “a mouth speaking great things” “against the Most High;” he “does according to his will;” “magnifies himself above every god, nor regards the God of his fathers;” before him three of the horns “are plucked up by the roots;” “he wears out the saints;” and he practices and prospers for “a time, and times, and the dividing of time” (three and a half years) (vii: 8, 24, 25; xi: 36, 37).

In Thess. ii he is the “Man of Sin;” one whose inner element and outer characteristic is sin, and nothing but sin. He has a coming (*parousia*) and an apocalypse, like the Son of God. He exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped. His coming is according to the working of Satan with all signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of

unrighteousness. He takes his seat in the temple of God and sets himself forth as God. *Treason against God* is his uncommon crime. In First John, ii: 22, he is the Antichrist who denieth the Father and the Son."

In Revelation (xiii: 5-8) he blasphemes God, the divine Name, the heavenly Tabernacle, and all who dwell in heaven; makes war against the saints and overcomes them; and he continues forty-two months (three and a half years). Such in brief is the portrait given by the Spirit of God of the coming Man, the Antichrist, the mock Messiah.

His origin is mysterious, apparently supernatural. Twice in the Apocalypse it is said he "ascends out of the bottomless pit," xi: 7; xvii: 8. There is something darkly significant in these words—"he cometh up out of the abyss." Some think he will be the devil incarnate; others, that he will be an ancient foe like Antiochus Epiphanes or Nero, who shall return to earth from the nether world. Many think he will be an apostate Jew. But whoever he will be or whence, one thing is certain, when he comes Satan will give him his power and his throne and great authority, will fill him from head to heel with his infernal energy, and dower him with more than human craft and cunning.

The second Beast rises from the earth, xiii: 11-18. His appearance, two-horned as a lamb, suggests harmlessness and even weakness, but his voice has in it the roar of the Dragon. His character is diabolic, and he acts in complete harmony with the other Beast, the

ten-horned and seven-headed monster. This is the False Prophet, xvi: 13; xix: 19; xx: 10. The true prophet lives in God's presence and receives his messages from Him. This false prophet lives in the presence of the monster Beast, and derives all his power and authority from him. It is his business to promote the worship of the Beast and to bring the whole world into subjection to him, ver. 12. He is not an independent actor in the scenes of the End-time, he is subordinate to the first Beast, and is his servant and minister. Hence he simulates or actually works miracles, bringing fire from heaven as Elijah did at Carmel, and endowing the image of the Beast which he constructs with apparent life and speech. But let it be noted that he does not claim divine homage for himself. This the Antichrist emphatically does, as the prophets Daniel, Paul (2 Thess. ii: 4), and John (xiii: 3, 8), attest. Therefore the lamb-like beast is not the Antichrist, though in spirit and action he resembles him. He is Antichrist's "armour-bearer," as Irenæus calls him; he is his prime minister and ally.

Furthermore, he binds into a vast union or corporation all the followers of the Beast, and brands them each with his mark and number in the forehead and in the right hand, so that none may buy or sell unless he belongs to the Federation and bears the Beast's cipher—the most stupendous system of "boycott" ever established! The brand impressed on the Beast's subjects is his own name, or the number of his name, ver. 17. It seems very likely, therefore, that the name has a numerical value which is found in the addition

of the letters forming the name, as most, if not all, interpreters believe. The number of the name is given as 666, a trinity of sixes, but one short of perfection. A perfect trinity of the number would be 777. Antichrist's enigmatical monagram falls short of completeness by a trine set of digits. "It is the number of a man;" that is, so far as the arithmetic goes, it is human, not that of a brute, nor of a spirit, such as the devil is: Antichrist is human, a man. What his name is or will be is absolutely unknown. Guesses there are in plenty from Irenæus' *Lateinos* down to *Napoleon*. It is useless to add others to the conjectural list. When the Beast is actually here his name with its enigmatical number will be well known; perhaps not sooner.

Here, then, are set before us sinister portraits of the foes of God and of His people of the last days: the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet, a triad of diabolism. Joined with these and their dupes are countless multitudes of our poor race who shall have deliberately rejected the Gospel of the grace of God, and shall have chosen instead the strong delusion and the lie, 2 Thess. ii: 9-11; Rev. xiii: 7, 8, 12, 14, 16.

THE PROGRAM OF THE END, chap. xiv.

Chapter xiv contains seven visions which appear to record the main events of the closing days of our age. Chronological sequence is observed, save in the case of the first, viz.: the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mt.

Zion. This scene is anticipative and proleptic, it belongs to the consummation, and even beyond, to the Millennium itself. If the Dragon is active in ordering his forces for the final struggle, xiv: 1-5, encourages us with the assurance that the Lamb is gathering, guarding and fitting His own loyal company for the part they have in the execution of His plans. The number 144,000 no doubt is in a sense ideal, a round number, not necessarily literal, and it is made up largely, if not exclusively, of the seed of Abraham, the new Israel. That these are to be identified with the same number in (vii: 1-8) it seems certain. The number is the same; the seal of God in their foreheads there corresponds with the name of God in their foreheads here. The change from seal to name may be accounted for by the mark in the forehead and hand imposed on the followers of the Beast. God will have His ransomed ones to bear His own blessed name as their distinguishing mark. They have been redeemed from earth; they are holy and blameless; they follow the Lamb as devoted and obedient servants; and they stand with Him on Mount Zion, the earthly center for blessing for the whole race, the point of departure for the millennial kingdom and latter-day glory. They also are the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb, which means that all Israel shall be saved, for these redeemed are the pledge and sample thereof; and they are besides, as firstfruits, "the Divine kernel," as Auberlen names them, of the new humanity, the seed by which the purified earth shall be peopled.

But must we confine the 144,000 to the redeemed of

Israel? May there not be saved Gentiles among them? There is profound significance in the promise to the overcomers of the church of Philadelphia: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Safety in the hour of universal trial is here promised these saints; they are sheltered by the power of the Lord. There is no hint that a "rapture" of these from the earth takes place; the Greek preposition (*ek*) forbids the notion. The promise appears to signify that they shall be in the hour of trial, but they shall be kept in safety, and shall come out of it unscathed and untouched. So also the 144,000 of vii: 1-8; ix: 4; xiv: 1-5. These likewise are safe in the hour of trial. In the latter vision the Beast and False Prophet, the tribulation, and the suffering are all behind them; they are forever secure on Mount Zion with the Lamb. Besides, the saints in Philadelphia have Christ's name and the Father's written upon them, as the 144,000 have (Rev. iii. 12).

VISION OF WORLD-WIDE PREACHING, xiv: 6, 7.

In both the noun and verb forms of this proclamation there is the idea of glad tidings, good news—the Gospel. It is called "everlasting," both because of what it is in itself and what it promises; it is eternal as to the salvation it offers and as to the bliss it pledges. The preaching is universal, to all that dwell (Grk. *sit*, as if content with their lot) upon the earth.

Hope this preaching holds out, but it is conditional, brief. "Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come." A strange Gospel surely! Judgment is impending, it is at hand, but an hour off! Therefore "fear God"—reverence, honor, obey and trust Him, for His terrific judgment is about to break down upon the guilty. It is the time of the End; the Beast, the False Prophet, the Dragon are all on the stage of action now, and the closing scenes are at hand. This is God's last, merciful appeal—His final call. It connects with our Lord's words in Matt. xxiv: 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come."

THE FALL OF BABYLON ANNOUNCED, xiv: 8.

This is the first mention of Babylon in the book, but the seer will return to the grim topic and give us a full-length portrait of it, xvii, xviii. Here Babylon is spoken of as a corrupt and corrupting system by which the nations of earth are debauched. Her doom is announced in very striking terms: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Babylon's overthrow is one of the first chief events succeeding the proclamation that the hour of God's judgment is come.

Solemn Warning against any Partnership with the Beast, xiv: 9-12. The most appalling alternatives will confront men in the days when the Beast comes to the

climax of his wickedness and despotism. Either men must worship him and receive his brand as being his property, or they must die, xiii: 15. Either they must utterly repudiate him and his worship and his rule, or they must suffer the awful torment prepared for the lost, xiv: 10, 11. There will be saints who will resist him to the death, xiii: 7; xiv: 12. Dreadful as will be the judgments of heaven on the apostates of that time, they will have no cause to complain, for here God in His abundant mercy, when the very end itself is in full view, appeals to men and warns them as He alone can to flee for their lives from all contact and commerce with the Beast.

BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO DIE FROM HENCEFORTH,
xiv: 13.

The sweetness and depth of this gracious announcement is, "henceforth," *i. e.*, from this time on. The Great Tribulation is now running its sanguinary course; the Beast has control of the world itself, and is doing his will with none to hinder, so it seems. Saints fall beneath his cruel decrees. But they, not he, are the conquerors; they die, but they rest from their toils, from their anguish and their agony (cf. vi: 11; 2 Thess. i: 7). The time of suffering is foreshortened (Matt. xxiv: 22). At the utmost it is but three years and a half, xiii: 5. But the promise in Matt. xxiv: 22 (cf. Mark xiii: 20) seems to limit even this period, so that in the case of the saints it will not run its full course; they shall be taken out of it ere **the**

whole of it has closed. Their resurrection and glorification are near, hence they are "blessed."

THE HAVEST, xiv: 14-16.

The Reaper is none other than the Son of Man, Jesus Christ our Lord. The "white cloud" He sits on denotes it, for it is the symbol of the Divine presence. In the Transfiguration a "bright cloud" is seen. Again and again it is affirmed He will come with Clouds, "in the cloud" (Lu. xxi: 27). He wears a Crown, the Victor's Crown (*stephanos*), for now He is to show Himself the Conqueror of death and the grave. The harvest is unquestionably that of the gathering of the righteous, living and dead. Christ Himself declares that the harvest is "the consummation of the age," Matt. xiii: 39. And here the harvest is actually come, the grain is "over-ripe;" it must be gathered and garnered, for the number of the redeemed is complete, is filled up. The Royal Reaper here is the Son of God, but angels are associated with Him, as He Himself says, Matt. xiii: 39. The same supreme event is thus described by the Lord in His Olivet prediction: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his select from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxv: 31). Still another inspired account of this majestic scene is 1 Thess. iv: 13-18. Here is described in symbol the final and universal gathering of God's people into the everlasting Kingdom by resurrection and translation.

It occurs before the wrath of God is poured out, but not before the Tribulation, if this chapter does really present the order of events at the time of the End, as it certainly seems to do. But the harvest may be reaped before the hour of the great trial has run its course, as already intimated. Hence the comforting assurance given the martyrs in ver. 13.

THE VINTAGE, xiv: 17-20.

This is the seventh event of the chapter, the last and the most terrible of all. It represents the wrath of God poured out to the uttermost upon the ungodly, the destroyers of the earth (xi: 18). It is the Day of Judgment, the day of vengeance, the day of the perdition of ungodly men. The figure of the vintage for this awful day of wrath is common to the prophets. Isaiah uses it of the avenging Messiah, "I have trodden the winepress alone; I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment" (Isa. lxiii: 1-4). Joel in like manner, "Come, tread ye: for the winepress is full, the fats overflow" (Joel, iii: 11, 12, 14; Rev. xix: 15); "and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God." It is the time of vengeance untempered with any mercy, wrath unmixed with any compassion, for long He has been still and refrained Himself, but now He will destroy and devour at once, Isa. xlii: 13, 14. Parallel with this judgment scene is the tremendous revelation of chap.

xix: 11-21. The event is the same in both places. The vintage here is identical with the Advent there, and with the hurling of the Beast and the False Prophet alive into the Lake of Fire, and with the slaughter of their armies.

No saints of God will be found in the winepress judgment. They are delivered from "the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i: 10): "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. i: 7, 8. The prophets attest, however, that in those days of the divine judgments Israel as the chosen people will be delivered and blessed and be made a blessing, Joel iii: 17-21; Zech. xiv: 8-21. But the saints who have gone through the Tribulation will be gathered in the blessed Harvest-home safe from the devouring wrath and the consuming fire of God's vengeance.

With these closing scenes of our age as depicted in our chapter are associated the Vials of Chap. xvi. These are described as containing the seven last plagues, *i. e.*, the divine judgments which are consummated in the End-time, "for in them is finished the wrath of God." The Vials cover the last three years and a half of the End, and they terminate with the vintage.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES, xv, xvi.

Before describing the pouring out of the Vials the Seer narrates a vision of the victors at the sea of glass, xv: 2-4. The sea is of glass, not of water; it is solid; for upon (*epi*) it the victorious band stands. The figure of the glassy sea seems to be taken from the "molten sea" of Solomon's Temple (1 K. vii: 23), though with changes. "The molten sea" was for the purification of the hands and the feet of the priests; but this glassy sea is immaculate and undefilable. Those who stand upon it likewise are holy and pure, they need no washing, they have been forever cleansed from all defilement. They have come to this exalted position after trial and suffering. They have gotten victory over the Beast and over his image and over his name. Obviously they have been through the Great Tribulation. But now the scene of conflict is past. They stand, like Israel of old, on the triumphant side of the Red Sea, and they lift up their voices in exultant song. Their song is that of Moses the servant of God and of the Lamb. This fact intimates, perhaps, that they are of Jewish origin. If so, they belong to the martyred remnant referred to in xii: 11, 17. But we are not to exclude Gentile martyrs from this company on the glassy sea; perhaps we should not err greatly if we included the in-

numerable host of vii: 9-17 among them. They exalt God's marvellous works in their song-works of righteous judgment which He has poured upon the wicked, for they have been witnesses of their sins and crimes. They celebrate Him as "King of the ages" ("King of saints" of A. V. is no doubt wrong).

The vision is beyond question prospective, proleptic. It relates to the time when the Tribulation is past, the judgments have fallen, and God's justice has at length been fully vindicated.

The Vials (xvi) are in reality *bowls*, as the Revisors translate; they are like the cups of the Temple, broad and deep, used for pouring out the drink-offering. The Vials, of course, are figures of speech; they represent the concentrated, tremendous judgments which God will visit upon the ungodly of the End-time. Their action is amazingly swift and continuous. There seems to be no pause between them.

The Seven Plagues have affinity with the judgments inflicted on Egypt (Ex. vii: 20, 21; viii: 5, 6; ix: 15-17, etc.), and particularly with the first four Trumpets (viii: 7-12). God scourges the wicked with nature's forces as once He did the Egyptians, and as He often chastised Israel by like means. But when these Plagues are poured out the whole world will feel the fearful visitation. Earth, air, water and sun—man's beneficent servants—will then become instruments of torture and of death, and the spirits of the elements will justify God in His righteous dealings with the ungodly.

The Plagues have features peculiar to themselves.

The fourth is entirely new; the others are more intense and violent in their action than the Trumpets. The fifth deals directly with the Beast's seat of power; judicial blindness smites his kingdom; madness and defiance rule. But while men gnaw their tongues for pain and writhe in agony amid dreadful suffering, they grow more hardened and blaspheme their almighty Judge.

The sixth Vial is poured out on Euphrates. The sixth Trumpet also deals with the same river; but it sets loose the four angels bound there, who then slay the third part of men (ix: 15). Here the river is dried up so as to open the way for the coming of the kings from the sunrising. The Euphrates was the boundary and eastern limit of the old Roman Empire. In the new and satanic empire which shall arise every barrier is gone, and armies from the far East may freely pass to the place of the final struggle. The vast hordes of Asia will be involved in the decisive and overwhelming battle of the great day of God the Almighty, no less than those of other continents.

A marvellous thing happens in connection with the action of this Vial, three frog-like spirits issue from the mouth of the Dragon, of the Beast, and of the False Prophet. They are demons, vile and loathsome, yet possessed with immense power. They represent the malign influence which this devilish triad will exert over the world; it is by them that earth's armies will be organized and led into the field for the great battle with God. It is plainly said they are demons. By their persuasiveness of speech, by the

signs and wonders they will work, and by their tireless energy, they will lead astray the unbelieving world, and countless hosts will march to Har-Magedon to their awful doom. "Kings of the whole world" shows how complete the success of these frog-like demons will be. The earth will then be in revolt against God. The events of the End-time will be world-wide. A prophetic word spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself discloses how universal the delusions of men will be in that day: "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show signs and wonders, that they may lead astray, if possible, the elect" (Mark xiii: 22).

The seventh angel poured out his Vial upon the air, and a great Voice from the Throne proclaimed, "It is done." The judgments are exhausted, the wrath is finished.

Babylon comes into remembrance before God. In chap. xiv: 8 the fall of Babylon is noted as the third event in the series of the time of the End. Here its judgment seems to be placed under the seventh Vial. There is no real discrepancy. In chap. xvi: 17-21 the closing scenes are summed up together, and temporal sequence is not strictly observed. The great city, and the cities of the nations, and islands, and mountains, and Babylon, all share in the terrific judgments. Besides, chaps. xvii and xviii make it evident that the corrupt ecclesiastical system ("The Harlot") and "Babylon" symbolize both a religious apostasy and a city, so that it is possible that some brief time may elapse between the overthrow of the

one and of the other: the system may fall first, the city next in the final order of the events. A precious word in parenthesis is given us, xvi: 15: ("Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.") It is for His saints. The last blows are about to fall, but He is speedily coming now, so watch!

Thus we come to the close of the three great septinaries, Seals, Trumpets and Vials. A kind of progression is marked by them. The opening of the Seals reveals the events about to happen. The blasts of the Trumpets announce the events as forthcoming. The outpouring of the Vials execute them, and so close the whole, God's righteous wrath being now finished.

Once more the statement must be made that these Visions are contemporaneous, not successive, with long stretches of time lying between them, as the historical interpreters affirm. All three end at the same supreme event, the Consummation, although they do not start at the same point. The first four Seals appear to be prior to the seven years of Daniel's last great Week, within which so mighty events are crowded. These Seals make ready the way for those momentous years. The remaining three Seals belong to that Week in both its halves.

The Trumpets sound during the whole of the Week, the Woe Trumpets no doubt belong to the second half.

The Vials pertain to the second half, the final three years and a half, the time when the Beast is doing his

worst, when the Great Tribulation is running its awful course, and wickedness and crime are at the flood. These Bowls are filled full with the wrath of God, and in them the wrath is finished, xv: 1, 7. Judgment has completed its stern work with the outpouring of the Vials.

CHAPTER XII.

INTERPOSED EXPLANATORY VISIONS, chaps. xvii-xix: I-10.

The visions recorded in this great section of the book are interposed between the Vials (xvi) and the Advent of Christ, xix: 11. They are designed to furnish us with more definite and comprehensive information touching the character and the doom of Babylon the Great. Twice already has this evil system named Babylon been mentioned, xiv: 8; xvi: 19; but no explanation is there given of it. But now once more the Seer, as is his wont, goes back to open a new episode in his marvellous revelations, and he does so that he may explain what Babylon is, what its evil influence has been, and what its fate shall be. This is the theme of these chapters—Babylon the Great, the Harlot, the Mother of Abominations. Two gigantic forms of evil are made very prominent in the Apocalypse: the one is the revolt of the civil power against God; the other is ecclesiastical apostasy. The first is prefigured by the Beast; the second by the lewd Woman, the Harlot. This latter we are now to study.

1. Note the prominence of Babylon in the book, xiv: 8; xvi: 19; xvii, xviii; xix: 1-3. One chapter is devoted to the Beast, with reference to him in some others; here two whole chapters are occupied with

Babylon and the Beast, while there are references to it in three others. It is significant that it is one of the angels of the seven vials that shows John the judgment of the Harlot. As these spirits are the executors of God's wrath on the Beast, so will they be in the destruction of Babylon.

2. Descriptive names of Babylon. It is called a harlot, ver. 1. The meaning of the symbol is plain. Scripture frequently charges Israel with the sin of adultery, of playing the harlot (Ezek. xvi; Hos. i, etc.). A city also is declared to be guilty of the like sin, *e. g.*, Jerusalem (Ezek. xvi: 2, 48). By this is meant that a people or city in relation with God who becomes unfaithful to Him, who breaks covenant with Him, who seeks after other gods, and who serves idols, is charged with the crime of spiritual adultery. Such a body is like a wife who proves disloyal to her husband and her vows, and gives her love to other men. It is one of the strongest figures the Bible uses to express God's abhorrence and reprobation of unfaithfulness to Him. The epithet, harlot, describes an apostate religious system or community. But it is noteworthy that while Israel become idolatrous is called adulteress because she is Jehovah's wife, Babylon is a harlot charged with fornication. Not once in these chapters is Babylon called adulteress, nor her sin adultery, but uniformly she is the harlot and her sin fornication. Obviously this Woman is unlike Israel in her relation with God, and must not be confounded with that people. She is not a *wife*, she may be "espoused."

Moreover, a most extraordinary name was seen inscribed on her forehead: "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth," ver. 5. Whether the term "mystery" is to be regarded as a part of the inscription or an explanation of the content of the inscription is not easy to determine. Without attempting to settle which it is, let it suffice now to say that the word certainly designates the essential nature of the repulsive object on which the prophet is gazing. The fearful picture represents *Babylon*, a mysterious system, secret, fascinating and seductive in its amazing power and influence. "Mystery" is closely akin to Paul's "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. ii: 7); it stands in sharpest antithesis with "the mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. iii: 16). Wordsworth defines the term as "a secret spell bearing the semblance of sanctity."

The Scarlet Woman is also Babylon the Great. Old Babylon on the Euphrates was idolatrous, intolerant, proud, despotic. This mystic Babylon is idolatrous and fosters idolatry. She is the prolific mother of abominations. She is both corrupt and corrupting, "the Mother of Harlots." The virus of the evil system is contagious, infectious, it spreads over the earth. She is a fierce persecutor, is seen to be drunken with the blood of the saints whom she has ruthlessly slaughtered. Old Babylon was likewise intolerant and a persecutor. One instance may suffice as proof. Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, made proclamation that "all people, nations and languages" should prostrate themselves before the

golden image which he had set up. The edict was enforced by the savage threat that all who refused should be cast into a burning fiery furnace. Three Hebrews refused to worship the royal idol, and were cast into the furnace. The new mystic Babylon exhibits the like persecuting spirit, and kills all who refuse to obey her idolatrous mandates. The names inscribed on her forehead witness to her character. Israel's high priest bore a golden plate on his forehead with the ineffable name inscribed on it: "Holiness to the Lord." The Scarlet Woman bears on hers a cluster of names that brand her as most impure, most loathsome. She is both a temptress and betrayer of peoples and nations, xvii: 2, 4; xviii: 3; xix: 2. She intoxicates the world with the wine of the fury of her seductions, she drugs them with her deadly love-potions. She is presented to us as the vilest of all vile systems.

3. The place and seat that this symbolic Woman occupies are very noteworthy. She sits upon many waters, xvii: 1. The waters are explained to be "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." The figure denotes the widespread influence which the system exerts, and the vastness of its sway over mankind. She is described as a great City, xvii: 18; xviii: 10. Babylon the Harlot, the corrupter of earth, has its seat in a city with seven hills. Furthermore, she has her seat upon the Beast, him she rules as her obedient servant. Her seat gives her a proud pre-eminence and insures her victorious sway. The color of the Beast is scarlet, as is the clothing of the

Woman, indicative of the blood guiltiness and persecutions which stain them both. The crimson-colored Beast is the same as that seen rising from the sea (xiii: 1), the blasphemous and cruel World-power. The hateful picture here given us indicates the close association the Harlot has with the godless State and her control of it. Her attire is very notable for its brilliancy and its richness; scarlet, purple, precious stones and rare gems adorn her. Her robes are imperial, her jewels queenly. In dress and in attitude her meretricious character is displayed: "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the abominations of the earth."

Such is the hideous portrait presented to us by the pen of inspiration of a corrupt and corrupting system that once had fellowship with God and labored faithfully to further His cause among men. Now alas! it has become "the habitation of demons, and the hold of every unclean spirit, and the hold of every unclean and hateful bird" (xviii: 2). John writes: "And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder." It is not surprising. Who does not feel profound grief, a sense of sorrow and of awe, when looking upon the dreadful spectacle of a fallen, impure organization which once was pure and true, but which now has become unfaithful and vile?

Who or what is this Woman with her twin name of Harlot and Babylon? What does the repulsive symbol mean? Are the predictions about her sufficiently explicit to enable us to identify her? Undoubtedly, they are. More than once in the course of these notes

it has been intimated that the Harlot-Babylon is an apostate religious system. But what system is meant?

1. The Woman is sharply distinguished from the Beast. Beyond all denial, if the Beast be the World-power, as we have all along set forth, the Woman cannot be. She is in most intimate relations with him, but from him she is distinct. She rides him, therefore she is not the same as he. Before this fact the historical interpretation of the Apocalypse completely breaks down. That view makes the Beast and the Woman the same thing—a view negatived here.

2. The Woman cannot be the star-crowned, sun-clothed Woman of chap. xii: 1, 2. It is Israel, the Messianic nation, that is there symbolized, not at all the Christian Church. Many interpreters, however, insist that the Woman of chap. xii and the Harlot of chap. xvii are one and the same; that she, holy and true at first, became at length degenerate and fell from her lofty estate and became at last the unclean temptress of nations and the assassin of the saints. The only real argument for the identification of the two Women we have seen is, both are found in the "Wilderness." But the sun-clothed Woman is there sheltered from the wrath of the Great Red Dragon, and is nourished of God there for three and a half years, the period of the great tribulation. Now, it seems to us incredible and impossible that she should become the vile and guilty Harlot of the later vision in so short a time. The Woman of xvii is not the Woman of chap. xii become apostate.

3. The Harlot is Christendom estranged from God

and become thoroughly secularized and degenerate. This is our most solemn conviction. Romanism, we believe, is the chief subject of this frightful prophecy. But the Greek Catholic organization, mainly as existing in Russia and Eastern Europe, as also worldly and unfaithful Protestantism are involved and included therein. We begin with the identification of Romanism with this symbol. It is official and hierarchical Romanism we are dealing with, not the body of adherents to that system who are generally both ignorant and superstitious. The historical reality and the prophetic portrait here drawn are too much alike, match too exactly, to mistake the meaning.

Papal Rome claims to be a Mother, calls herself the "mother of all churches," the mistress and teacher of all Christians. The pope asserts his supremacy over all of them, and indeed over all nations as well. In 1825 Leo XII struck a medal bearing on the one side his own image, and on the other that of the church of Rome symbolized as a Woman, holding in her left hand a cross, and in her right a Cup, with the legend, "Sedet super universum," "The whole world is her seat" (Hyslop, *Two Babylons*). She would dominate all mankind, xvii: 15.

The Woman has her seat in a city of seven hills, xvii: 9, 18. For more than a thousand years the Papacy and Rome the City have been regarded practically as one and the same. Rome is the Papacy to this day. No other is called "the city of seven hills;" no other has ever ruled over the earth as Rome has. Pagan Rome governed the world for centuries; papal

Rome has for ages held sway in our planet as no other city has. It is Rome where the Woman "sitteth." The city and the system coalesce, they are convertible terms.

The name inscribed on the Harlot's forehead points unmistakably to an apostate religious system, and pre-eminently to Romanism. Everything in the worship of that enormous organization is shrouded in mystery, is designed to impress men with its hidden, secret and supernatural authority and power. Its persistent use of a dead language, its celebration of the Mass, its confessional and priestly absolution, its claims to fix the destinies of men even in the unseen world, its mystic ceremonies and rites, the dress of its officiating priests and their postures and actions when observing "the mysteries" of the cult—all combine to invest the system with an impressiveness and mysticism nowhere else found save in some of the ancient pagan rites. The Greek Church is characterized by the like heathen features, though somewhat less flagrant.

The Harlot's connection with the World-power—riding upon it—is realized in the universal domination which the Papacy claims and asserts. The Pope arrogates for the Roman See supremacy over peoples and states and rulers. Not always has he been able to enforce the proud claim, but when he can he does to the fullest extent. "The pope can depose from their offices magistrates and princes, and release subjects from their oath of allegiance." "The pope is king of kings, ruler of rulers, the prince of bishops,

the judge of all men" (Bellarmino). "The imperial majesty is subjected to the pope as the Vicar of Christ Jesus, and kings ought to lay down their crowns before him. The Pontiff is monarch, emperor, king and bishop of the whole earth" (*Decisioni della Rota Romana*). These quotations are taken from Roman Catholic authorities; they could be multiplied indefinitely. To this day the Roman See exalts its absolute supremacy over all nations, sovereigns and peoples. It is not union with the State that is asserted, but dominion over the State. Subjection to the civil authority is the position of those ecclesiastical bodies named "State Churches," whether Protestant or Greek Catholic. Rome exalts her authority over all States and Churches alike. She rides, or seeks to ride upon the World-power, to subject to herself all authority and all rule.

The Scarlet Woman is intolerant, persecuting: she is seen to be drunken with the blood of the saints. Here, again, the parallelism between the symbol and the apostate religious system is startlingly close. Count if you can the victims of Rome's bloody work in the world, her murderous cruelties. It is even doubted whether pagan Rome ever slew as many human beings as has Papal Rome. Nor is Rome the only guilty one in this respect. The Greek Catholic and some Protestant bodies likewise have stained their hands in the blood of some of the noblest and purest of God's children. Not without a dreadful meaning is this Harlot arrayed in scarlet and crimson: bloody-minded she is, and blood-stained also.

The Harlot is the "mother of abominations," *i. e.*, idolatrous. Images, shrines, relics, human beings ("the saints") and angels are objects of devotion in all apostate Christendom. The Virgin Mary with vast multitudes holds a higher place of veneration than did ever Minerva in Greece, or Ceres in Rome, or Diana in Ephesus. Her worship exceeds that even of the Son of God Himself. Nothing will sooner arouse the fanatical rage of her devotees than the teaching that Mary, blessed as she was in being chosen to give birth to the Son of Man, has no part in our salvation, can do nothing to deliver us from sin and reconcile us with God. Ever since Pius IX officially proclaimed the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, Mary has been lifted into a place of eminence and authority never before held by her. Add to this the Dogma of infallibility with which the Pope was crowned in 1870 by the Vatican Council, and one will perceive to what heights of arrogance and blasphemy this Roman system is now exalted.

But departure from divine truth, false teaching, unwarranted claims, arrogant assumptions, will worship and idolatry are not to be charged against papal Rome exclusively. Babylon is "the mother of harlots." She has daughters like herself. The Greek Catholic church, the Coptic, and others have as widely departed from the simplicity of the Gospel as has Rome. Who would venture to deny that there are signs of a falling away in Protestantism? A scarcely disguised infidelity in the great Schools of Germany; advanced ritualism and Higher Criticism of a most

pronounced type advocated in the Colleges and Universities of Great Britain; scientific skepticism and rationalism taught in the Universities of our own country; "an open and organized movement toward Rome, numbering thousands of clerical and lay adherents;" in the Church of England; doctrines held and taught in Evangelical Churches that "thirty years ago would have ranked a man as an infidel;" denial of the supernatural, ridicule of miracles, denial of the inspiration, integrity, and authority of the Scriptures; hostility toward the divine claims of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel; denial of the Deity of Jesus Christ, the persistent effort on the part of many to sink Him to a level with men, born into the world as other men are and having a human father and mother as other men; denial of His resurrection from the dead and His Mediatorial action in heaven as a glorified Man, and His Coming to judge the quick and the dead; Paul charged with being the author of Christianity and not Christ—a Christianity which Christ did not teach; a salvation now preached that is to be the result and fruit of "works," culture, education, "character-building," a reconstruction of society in the Socialistic conception, the importance of the individual being eliminated—all this and much more than this betokens the working of "the mystery of lawlessness" in the heart of Christendom, the presence and the corrupting influence of the Harlot's "daughters" in the "religious world." The Laodicean age, with its latitudinarianism, its proud boastings, and yet its spir-

itual bankruptcy ignored, has set in, though not yet full-grown. Worse things are fast approaching.

No influence for evil is so great, none so far-reaching in its disastrous effects, as an apostate religious system. There is no sphere it does not invade, none that it does not befoul. The State, the family, education, literature, the press—everything, in short, of life and of civilization it touches and defiles. Chapter xviii of Rev. discloses the vast results on mankind of Babylon's overthrow. Kings, merchants, seamen, wail over Babylon's fall, and recognize with profoundest grief that all commerce, all the immense business of the world, had hitherto been bound up with the Babylonian system, and now by the just judgment of God it has all crumbled into desolation and ruin. We believe that the predictions recorded in chap xviii involve a far wider field of influence than a single city; they point to the world of commerce, of trade—in short, to the complex, interdependent secular relations of modern civilization. Christendom does control the wealth and the commerce of the civilized nations, nay, of the heathen nations also. Babylon, the Harlot, means more than a single city, though it may have its chief place of power there. It is Rome, but likewise all that Rome stands for, all its worldwide influences. As a city Rome never was a great commercial center, nor is it ever likely to be anything like what Tyre or Alexandria were, what London and New York now are. But apostate Christendom will one day, if not now, embrace the world and poison all its centers and all its life. With Babylon's fall the complicated, rich, spectacular and cultivated civilization of earth will be

utterly demolished, for in its essence and its spirit it will be the foe of God, the corrupter of the truth of God, and the righthand of the Antichrist. No wonder all heaven rejoices when the enormous thing, built up with so tremendous efforts, with such expenditure of intellectual energy, and by such unjust and evil methods, dies at length beneath the stroke of outraged justice!

The destruction of the Harlot Babylon will be by the Beast and his ten-horn confederates, xvii: 16. When the Beast has served himself of Babylon, wearied at length by its arrogance and its claims, he will turn with fury upon it, tear it to pieces, eat its flesh, devour all its wealth and its power, and burn it with fire. Two gigantic forms of full-grown Wickedness is to distinguish the time of the End. The one is, the revolt and hostility of federated Government, the other an apostate religious system. The first is not yet manifested; the second, in its incipient stage, is here.

We may summarize the intercalated Visions of chaps. xvii, xviii, xix: 1-10 thus:

1. Five world-kingdoms had flourished and fallen when John wrote.

2. The sixth Kingdom, the Roman Empire, was then existing, but was to fall.

3. A seventh Kingdom shall arise and rule the earth. Its form is to be that of a Confederation of ten kingdoms, each ruled by its own sovereign, with unity centering in its great Head, the Antichrist.

4. The Harlot Babylon the symbol of an apostate religious system.

5. Both the Beast and Babylon, as predicted in the Apocalypse, belong to the time of the end, and are prefigured as at their worst, most godless and most blasphemous.

6. Babylon is destroyed by the Beast and his ten kings.

7. The Beast and his False Prophet are destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XIII.

ADVENT OF THE HEAVENLY CONQUEROR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, xix: 11; xx: 6.

I. This great section is the climax and the culmination of all the visions and predictions of the book. The Consummation so often noted in former chapters; the reiterated announcements of Christ's Coming in the seventh Seal, in the seventh Trumpet, in the seventh Vial, and elsewhere, now at last are become a reality in His personal return to our earth. The keynote has been, "Behold, He cometh." But now the diapason closes full on His Presence, "He is come." "I saw heaven opened." In chap. iv: 1 "a door is opened in heaven." Twice we are told the Temple in heaven was "opened" (xi: 19; xv: 5). But xix: 11 is on a wider scale; the heavens themselves open to the descending Son of God. He now comes, not as the Lamb, nor as the Bridegroom, but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the almighty Conqueror. He is followed by a dazzling retinue, the armies of heaven, His mighty angels. The scene is one of transcendent majesty. He is identified by His royal titles. He is "faithful and true" (i: 5; iii: 7, 14): "The Word of God" (Jno. i. 1): "King of kings" (xvii: 14). His personal appearance indicates who He is: "His eyes are a flame of fire" (i: 14; ii: 18); He is crowned with "many diadems," He is a King and

more than a king, He is above all kings and sovereigns; He is the Lord of heaven and earth: "His garment is sprinkled with blood" (Isa. lxiii: 2, 3): from His mouth issues a sharp sword (i: 16; ii: 12, 16; cf. 2 Thess. ii: 8; Isa. xi: 4). He is mounted on "a white horse," emblem of victory. This metaphor must not be confounded with the white-horse rider of vi: 2. That is a human warrior, this is the heavenly King; that is an ambitious and despotic military chieftain; this Rider judges and makes war "in righteousness." The heavenly armies that follow Him are the angelic hosts, Mar. viii: 38; 1 Thess. iii: 14; 2 Thess. i: 7-10; Jude 14; Zech. xiv: 5; Dan. vii: 10. The most momentous events ensue upon His Advent. The Beast, the False Prophet, the kings of earth and their armies are gathered to fight against the heavenly King, xix: 19. Their place of assembly is Har-Magedon, a noted battlefield (xvi: 16). Not a blow is struck by the heavenly hosts; the appearing of Christ, the great God and our Saviour, suffices to overwhelm all His foes, 2 Thess. ii: 8. The doom of the Beast and his guilty accomplice, the False Prophet, is most appalling. They were arrested, and "they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone," ver. 20. Two men were taken to glory without passing through the gates of death, Enoch and Elijah. Two men will be flung alive into the Lake of Fire, Antichrist and his prime minister, The False Prophet. The carnage of the Beast's army is frightfully great, vers. 17, 18, 21; cf. xiv: 20. The birds of the sky are bidden to this "great supper of God,"

and they "were filled with their flesh," cf. Ezek. xxxix: 17-20. Ezekiel predicts that it will require seven months to bury the slain, ver. 12, of that day of God's wrath.

This is the awful Vintage of xiv: 19, 20; cf. xix: 15—where a horseman riding over the battle-field finds the blood of the slain bridle-deep for 1,600 furlongs! The time is, The Day of the Lord: when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God (2 Thess. i: 7-10). It is the time when the proud World-power in its last and diabolical confederation is judged and destroyed, when the kingdom of the world becomes the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: when "the kingdom, and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven is given to the Son of Man and to the people of the saints of the Most High (Dan. vii: 14, 27). It is the End of our Age, the time fully come for the redemption of the purchased possession.

2. Satan Bound, xx: 1-3. The language of these verses, of course, is symbolical; but back of the symbols is a glorious reality. We have here, first, the clear recognition of the Devil's personality. He is no myth, nor a personification of the world's evil, nor of the principle of sin; he is a strong, fierce spirit, the enemy alike of God and of our race and its murderer (Jno. viii: 44). The names John here gives him denote that he is a person with thought, will, character and disposition. More than twenty distinct titles and names are given him in the New Testament,

every one of which expresses the idea of individuality and conscious being. He is as certainly an active, living spirit as is the angel Gabriel or the arch-angel Michael.

Secondly, for ages he has been unrestrained, "walking up and down in the earth," deceiving, tempting, leading captive and ruining as he listed, save as he was limited by the will of God. But, thirdly, he is now arrested and chained securely for a thousand years. The energy of the Seer's language is remarkable. Satan is "seized," next "chained;" then "cast into the abyss," after that "shut up," and finally "sealed." It is imprisonment with close confinement! It lasts for a thousand years. In chap. ix: 1, 2, the "pit of the abyss" is opened, and out of its yawning mouth issue the swarms of locusts. In xi: 7, xvii: 8 the Beast ascends from the abyss. Thrice is this undescribed Pit opened. But when the Dragon, the Old Serpent which is the Devil, and Satan, is hurled into it, securely bound with the angel's great chain, and over him in that dismal prison the huge cover shuts down, fast locked and sealed, opened no more will it be till the thousand years are finished. This will be earth's Jubilee, the longed-for Millennium. Not until Satan is seized, chained and locked up will there be, can there be, the blessed Millennium. Satan loose and a Millennium of peace and happiness are incompatible.

3. The First Resurrection, xx: 4-6.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and (I saw) the souls

of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

This is a much controverted portion of the Revelation; it is a sort of exegetical battle-field between those who are called respectively Pre-millennialists and Post-millennialists. Into the controversy there is no intention to enter, but what appears to us to be its meaning must be set down. We have the profound conviction that a bodily resurrection is certainly affirmed by it. Three parties, we believe, are here distinguished from each other by the inspired prophet: 1, The throned assessors to whom judgment is given, who represent all the redeemed; 2, martyrs who had laid down their lives for their testimony to Jesus and to the word of God; 3, such as had refused to worship the Beast, or his image, or to receive his mark. The distinction between these classes is not one of time, for they are all alike sharers in the blessedness of the First Resurrection; nor of character, for alike they are saints of God, redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, the distinction is one of experience, of what had been endured and suffered by them respectively.

John first mentions those who sit on thrones, to whom judgment is given: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." The plural *they* is indefinite, it may denote any number. But other Scripture, it is be-

lieved, sheds light on the question who these are. Christ Himself is certainly one here on His judgment-throne. With Him certainly are the Apostles. "And Jesus said unto them" (to Peter and the rest), "Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix: 28). The "regeneration," or renewal, here spoken of begins with the Advent of Christ and with the resurrection and glorification of the saints, as Paul teaches—"Creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." It awaits the redemption of our body, Rom. viii: 19-23. In that glorious age the Apostles will be Christ's assessors in judging men. But not these alone; all Christians are to be there present and to share in judging. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Cor. vi: 2, 3. Here the inspired assertion is, that the saints of God shall judge both the world and angels. Of course, their judgment will be in strict unison with that of Christ Himself; but however subordinate to His it may be, these saved men and women shall participate with the Apostles in judgment. Their judicial action is remarkable as to extent; it includes the wicked of the world and angels. Dan. vii: 21, 22 relates to the same procedure—"Until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High: and the time came that the saints possessed the

kingdom.” The figure here as in the other cases cited is of an assize. Judgment is had, the saints are vindicated, and they come into possession of the kingdom promised. Here are included all O. T. believers.

In all these instances the time of the judicial procedure is the same; it is at the coming of the Lord in great glory and power. In union with Christ the saints as a body, the whole company of the redeemed, as we think, share with Him in judging the world and angels. The sentence, “I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them,” is interpreted by the Lord Jesus, by Paul, and by Daniel, to mean the entire body of the saints, now raised up and glorified with Christ.

A distinct class of saints among the enthroned is brought to view; “and (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God.” Martyrs of Christ are these, believers who lay down their lives for His name and His word. “Souls” may include those “souls” seen under the altar (vi: 9), and who cried to God for vindication, and who were bidden rest and wait till their brethren and fellow-servants should be killed as they had been. It was in the disembodied state they were seen, as martyrs with the evidence of their execution on them—slain with the axe, the mode of capital punishment practiced by Rome before the establishment of the Empire. The use of the term *beheaded* seems to denote that all martyrs, whether under the Republic or the Empire, whether recent or remote, are to be included in these “wit-

nesses of Jesus." Now they are seen as raised up and enthroned.

Still another company of sufferers are introduced: "And such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand." The triumph of Christ is shared not by the martyrs only but by all who under the sway of the Beast and the False Prophet suffered reproach, imprisonment, loss of goods, maltreatment, exile. The words "such as" (*oitines*) point to a class distinct from the martyrs mentioned just before. Cyprian (fourth Cen.) noted the distinction; so do Swete, Edwards and others. John names particularly these two classes, because of their loyalty to Christ in suffering and death. Not all of them are slain, but all have the martyr spirit. Some of the last class may survive till the Advent, in which case they will be of those who shall not sleep (1 Cor. xv: 51).

Of all these disciples of the Lord Jesus, the enthroned, the martyrs, and the confessors, John says "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." By the words "lived and reigned" we understand and must understand their resurrection from the dead and their "change" if alive at the Lord's coming. So John himself understood it, for he adds, "This is the first resurrection." Some 42 times this term *resurrection* occurs in the New Testament, and once with a prepositional affix (Phil. iii: 11), and in each instance its application is confined to the raising up of the dead. Hence John says, "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished."

Many expositors, however, deny that the passage teaches a bodily resurrection. They see in it no more than a revival of the martyr spirit and of the principles of righteousness and truth for which the martyrs suffered. With them here is announced a spiritual resurrection, and not a physical one. Let such terms be substituted for those of John, and the absurdity of the view will be quite apparent: "I saw the 'principles' of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus; and the 'principles' of those who repudiated the Beast; and the 'principles' lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. This is the first resurrection of the 'martyr spirit.' On these 'principles' the second death hath no power. But the rest of the 'principles' lived not until the thousand years were finished." Believe it who can that John wrote such nonsense as this, we cannot. Never once in the N. T. is the term resurrection used in this sense.

It is sometimes said that Rev. xx: 4-6 is the only passage of Scripture which teaches a distinct and separate resurrection for the righteous. If true, this should not disturb anyone. One unmistakable statement from God should convince and satisfy even the most skeptical. Matthew alone tells us that many of the dead saints arose at Jesus' death and resurrection and appeared to many in the city (Matt. xxvii: 52, 53), but does any Christian doubt it? But the assertion is not true. Other Scripture teaches that the righteous are raised up before the wicked—theirs is an out-resurrection from the dead. Isa. xxv: 7-9

and Hosea xiii: 14 point to such a resurrection. Dan. xii: 2 clearly affirms it: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." "Many of" does not mean *all*; the resurrection here is not total, it is selective, many from among the whole number of the dead awake, the prophet affirms. We think Bush and Tregelles are right in translating thus: "these to everlasting life;" "those to shame," etc., and Tregelles goes on to say, "those" of the second part do not awake when "these" of the first part awake.

In Jno. v: 29 Jesus speaks of a "resurrection of life," and a "resurrection of judgment." But in ver. 24 He emphatically declares that believers "shall not come into judgment." These two resurrections appear to be distinct both as to character and time. In Lu. xx: 35 the Lord speaks of a resurrection which shall be "from (*ek*) the dead," as if it were separate from that of the wicked, the righteous being taken out from among them. Paul in Phil. iii: 11 writes of his intense longing to "attain unto the resurrection from the dead." His language is very precise and emphatic. Literally this he says: "If by any means I may attain unto the out-resurrection from the dead." Paul confidently expected a resurrection for the saved as totally distinct in time from that of the unsaved; it is to be one "out from among" them. All this Scripture confirms the glorious revelation in chap. xx: 4, 5 of "the first resurrection," which is confined to the saints of God, and in which the wicked do not share.

The resurrection of the holy dead takes place when Christ comes, 1 Cor. xv: 20, 23; 1 Thess. iv: 14-17. At His "Shout" they are awakened, and by His Voice they are called forth from their graves. But here in the Apocalypse the order of events seems to be this: (1) destruction of Antichrist; (2) imprisonment of Satan; (3) resurrection of all the righteous dead and change of believers still living at that time and their enthronement. But other Scripture, even the Revelation itself, gives a somewhat different order. We learn from 1 Thess. iv: 13-17 that the first act of the Lord at His coming will be to raise the sleeping saints, change living believers, and then together both shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. They come with the Lord to the earth as the term "to meet" imports (Lillie). Augustine perceived this, "it is as He is coming, not abiding, that we shall go to meet Him." As an ancient writer expresses it, "We shall be caught away to meet Christ, that all may come with the Lord to battle" (Ambrosiaster). The rapture of the saints to meet the advancing Saviour obviously is put by Paul before the destruction of Antichrist and the binding of Satan. In Rev. xi: 17, 18, the resurrection of the dead and the distribution of rewards to them is placed before the destroyers of the earth are themselves destroyed. So, too, in the program chapter (xiv) the harvest of the saints and their garnering precedes the awful judgment of the Vintage, xiv: 14-21. Is there, therefore, discrepancy between the various accounts of the events at the time of the end? There seems to be at first

sight, but it is only apparently so. In Rev. xix: 20-xx: 6 the Seer does not follow a strict chronological order. He groups the events together as if they were simultaneous (as indeed they are) without noting their succession.

Besides, prominence is here given to the doom of the great foes, the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Dragon. These have been filling the field of vision from the twelfth chapter down to this point. These horrible adversaries have been slaughtering the saints, blaspheming God, filling earth with blood and tears, with ruin and crimes, indescribable. It is fitting, it almost seems necessary and right, that their judgment and perdition should be described at once. The order is one of rank, not of time. We see the like order in Matt. xiii: 41-43, where the tares are first burned, and then the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. Yet, in point of fact, the righteous are gathered before the tares are burned, cf. Rev. xiv: 14-21. So, too, in chap. xix: 7, 8, the Marriage of the Lamb appears to precede the judgment of the Beast and the destruction of his hostile army. We believe that the Scriptures present the order of events at the Coming of Christ as follows: 1, The appearing of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven; 2, the resurrection of the sleeping saints and the change of living believers; 3, the ascension of all the saved to meet Him in the air; 4, the descent of the Lord with His glorious retinue to earth; 5, Antichrist and his False Prophet hurled into the Lake of Fire; 6, the destruction of the hostile armies of the Beast; 7, impris-

onment of Satan; 8, judgment of the nations (Matt. xxv: 31-46); 9, Millennial Kingdom and Glory.

“This is the first resurrection.” The term “first” is to be understood numerically, and not as to rank; it marks the order of time. Is there to be a second? Unquestionably. It is described in xx: 12, 13. It is objected that it is not called the second resurrection. Neither is there mention of the first death, although the “second death” is named twice, vers. 6, 14. There is no need. In the one case *first* is understood; in the other *second* is. Before this “first” there is no resurrection named or referred to in the book, if we read it aright. For resurrection is the immediate result of the coming and presence of Jesus Christ, and as He comes in connection with this “first,” and, hence, it is called first, no other has taken place. Many excellent and devout students of the Bible, however, believe that a previous resurrection has occurred, that of the Church, the Body of Christ, and they think it is set forth in the persons of the four and twenty Elders before the Throne, chap. iv. We have dealt with that passage already. Let it now be observed that if that were so, then we can see neither meaning nor force in this “first.” It is a blunder. But no mistake is found in the Apocalypse. This is absolutely the first, no other in the record of the book has there been. For it is now, in these two chapters, xix, xx: 6, that Christ, “the resurrection and the life,” actually appears in power and great glory. “Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth

shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." This majestic sentence is the central theme of the Apocalypse. Throughout the book the theme is repeated again and again. But in xix: 11 ff., He visibly appears; and immediately the resurrection ensues. No resurrection precedes this of xx: 4-6.

CHAPTER XIV.

LAST REVOLT AND FINAL JUDGMENT, xx: 7-15.

Two mysterious and extraordinary events are recorded in this section. The first is, Satan's release from prison, and his last revolt and eternal doom, xx: 7-10. A thousand years work no change in his character or methods. As soon as he is set free from the abyss he begins his old habit of deceit and rebellion against the Most High, and hostility toward His people. When he was ejected from his lofty place and cast to earth (xii: 12) he had but a "short time." Now he has but a "little time," but he uses it to the uttermost in furtherance of his malignant aims. His success is marvellous. A countless throng, described as gathered from the "four corners of the earth," Gog and Magog, march against "the camp of the saints, and the beloved city." But the rebellion ends most disastrously to the rebels. Before they strike a blow the fire from heaven devours them. Their crafty and hateful deceiver is hurled into the Lake of Fire. There he encounters once more his old accomplices and dupes, the Beast and the False Prophet. They are still alive after a 1,000 years have run their course. Such is the eternal doom of Satan; we never hear of him more. Gog and Magog here must not be confounded with Gog of Ezekiel xxxviii, xxxix.

The two are quite distinct, for Gog of Ezekiel appears before the thousand years, whereas the Gog of John is after that period. Ezekiel's Gog comes from "the north," whereas this people has no definite geographical associations. The attack by the Gog of Ezekiel is connected with Antichrist, but here that great enemy has no part; he had been cast into the Lake of Fire long before this.

The second event is the Final Judgment, xx: 11-15. This transcendently majestic scene occurs after the thousand years, and after the final rebellion of Gog, and after the Devil has been cast into the Lake of Fire, "which is the second death"—how long after we are not told, and no mortal knows. Before the judgment-throne appear the dead, "the great and the small." By "the dead" we understand all our race, with the exception of those who are the blessed sharers in "the first resurrection;" all who died before the thousand years, and all who die after that period, and to the end of time, who are unsaved.

"And books were opened," *i. e.*, the records of each human life in the vast assembly were produced. That such records are kept and will be opened in due time seems evident from Psa. lvi: 8; Mal. iii: 16; Dan. xii: 1. There will be present also the book of life (iii: 5; xiii: 8; xxi: 27); for some who are saved may die during the thousand years, and their resurrection and their judgment will at this time take place. The first resurrection saints will have had theirs long before.

The rule of judgment will be "works," cf. ii: 23;

Matt. xvi: 27. Even in the case of Christians who have their part in the first resurrection, their manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ will bring to light their deeds "done in the body, according to what they have done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. v: 10).

The issue of the great trial will be, that whosoever is not found written in the book of life will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Death and Hades will, likewise, be cast into that fearful Lake. Death, it seems, is not abolished until the Great White Throne is set up and human destiny is forever settled. With this teaching of the Apocalypse the apostle Paul agrees, for he assures us that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. xv: 26). Death, therefore, is not abolished even by the return of Christ, nor at the resurrection of those that are Christ's. The Advent is not a single point of time, but a period, beginning with His appearing and ending with the delivering up of the kingdom to God (1 Cor. xv: 24-28). But during the Millennial reign death will be the exception, not the rule as it now is. The prophets declare that at that time human life will be greatly prolonged, Isa. lxxv: 20-22: "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." "Premature death, and even death in a moderate old age, shall be unknown; he who dies a hundred years old shall be considered either as dying in childhood, or as cut off by a special

malediction" (Alexander). "For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people." Some trees live for centuries; so shall be the life of the righteous in that day, saith Jehovah.

CHAPTER XV.

VISION OF THE CITY OF GOD, xxi-xxii: 7.

Only brief notes on this great section of the book can we venture to offer. The revelation here is so transcendently sublime, so totally beyond all earthly knowledge and experience, that adequate interpretation is impossible; we must wait till we shall see its accomplishment to form just conceptions of its surpassing grandeur and beauty.

1. It is announced there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and there shall be no more sea. The fulfilment of this wonderful prediction will involve a fundamental change in the physical constitution of the world that now is and also of the visible heavens. Life would be impossible if the sea was "no more." Other Scripture gives assurance of the like transformation of the physical universe with which we are connected. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind," Isa. lxxv: 17 (cf. 2 Pet. iii: 5-13). He who made the world and all it contains can surely re-create it, clearing it of every vestige of sin and misery, of its limitations and its imperfections, and fitting it for the dwelling of perfect beings and of God's supreme glory. John is bidden, Write, for these things are true and faithful; they shall not fail to come to pass.

2. Descent of the new Jerusalem into the glorified earth, i: 2-4. The wicked and apostate system that once flourished had its capital city, Babylon. The pure and holy world is to have its bright and happy Capital, the new Jerusalem which comes out of heaven from God. In it will be the Shekinah, the Divine Presence, of which the glory in the Tabernacle and in the Temple was but a faint shadow, a dim reflection. He will dwell with the blessed inhabitants of the fair City—the ultimate fulfilment of all that lies hidden in the name, Immanuel. It will be in reality the sorrowless state, painless bliss, deathless life. Think how great a chasm would be made in our English tongue if all the words telling of grief and suffering, of tears and sobs, of pain and death, were stricken from it! No such terms will find a place in the language of the new Jerusalem, for the miseries and woes which give them birth will never be known there. “God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.” He will expunge the very fountain of tears. There will be nothing in the surroundings to call forth tears, there will be no capacity in the saved to weep. The eighth verse describes those who shall have no share in the bliss. The “fearful” means the cowardly, those who like craven soldiers turn their backs and flee when they encounter the enemy-apostates, in short. To these are joined the faithless, the abominable, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers and liars. Only “he that overcometh” shall possess this infinite heritage.

3. Description of the Heavenly City, xxi: 9-xxii: 5. This section gives us a nearer view of the Holy

City. It is very noteworthy that the view was given John through the ministry of one of the angels of the Seven Vials. It was one of these same angels who showed him the "judgment of the great harlot," xvii: 1. It was fitting that he who had furnished the vision of the ungodly and apostate city, should present the Seer with the vision of the Heavenly City.

(a.) Its Structure and Dimensions, xxi: 9-17. John's point of view is that of "a mountain, great and high," ver. 10. Ezekiel (xlii: 2ff) was also set upon a mountain when he was shown "the frame of a city"—a vision which corresponds in some degree with this of John, and which probably refers to the same thing. The descent here mentioned is identical with that of ver. 2. He returns to the subject now to give a fuller description. The first thing that arrests his attention is the City's flashing light, "Her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal." The term "light" is peculiar; not light in the abstract, but a body of light, as a star, a blazing luminary. The whole great City glowed with a light as a mighty sun. Crystalline and smokeless flame was the brilliant splendor with which it shone. Gems of the rarest and purest quality, gold that is transparent like the finest glass, are the only symbols which even an inspired prophet can use to set forth its majestic glory.

The Wall surrounding it had twelve foundations containing the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, ver. 14, and these were garnished with "all manner of precious stones." Twelve gems are men-

tioned as adorning the foundations. Swete writes that the stones "in the main are of four colors, viz.: blue (sapphire, Jacinth, amethyst), green (Jasper, chalcedony, emerald, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus), red (sardonyx, sardius), yellow (chrysolite)." All this tends to deepen and clarify the conception of the exquisite beauty, the dazzling glory, the preciousness and wealth of the Heavenly City.

The City lies four-square, is a perfect cube. Its encompassing wall is pierced by twelve Tower-gates, whereat twelve angels are stationed as royal guards or keepers. The gates have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Three gates are found in each side of the squares, each is a pure pearl. The combination of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve Apostles of the Lamb appears to signify the unity and the totality of the redeemed, both of Israel and of the Christian Body. All distinctions of race, creed and age will be unknown in the Holy City.

The wall's height is given as 144 cubits, probably equalling 216 feet. Its height is exactly the square of twelve. The length, breadth and height are equal (ver. 16), and they measure 12,000 *stadia*. A *stadia* is given as 606 $\frac{3}{4}$ feet, and the whole would be the stupendous sum of nearly 1,400 English miles.

(b.) Its Sanctuary, Light, Riches and Inhabitants, xxi: 22-27. It has no Temple as had the earthly Jerusalem; God and the Lamb are its Temple. Worship will not need any ceremony or rite, ritual or sacred place, in order to be earnest and wholehearted. Noth-

ing will thrust itself between the soul and Him who is loved; fellowship will be direct and unbroken.

The City's light will be the Lord's radiant presence. It will need neither sun nor moon. The Lord's infinite glory will be its light. It will be forever safe, its gates will never be shut, its riches secure, its holiness unstained and untarnished by any breath of impurity.

(c.) Its perfect bliss, xxii: 1-5. Paradise is finally and forever restored.

THE EPILOGUE, xxii: 6-21.

The Prologue is chap. i: 1-8, eight verses; the Epilogue contains sixteen verses, twice as many. The Coming of the Lord is the pre-eminent theme of both. In the Prologue we have these majestic words: "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." But this, sublime as it is, is surpassed by the threefold testimony of the Advent in the Epilogue. "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book," xxii: 7. "And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give to every man as his work shall be," xxii: 12. "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus," xxii: 20.

There are seven "blessings" pronounced on those who do or suffer certain things. They are:

1. i: 3; blessing on him who reads and they who hear the words of the prophecy of this book,

2. xiv: 13; blessing on the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth, for the Lord is speedily coming, they shall be raised up in the power of an endless life.

3. xvi: 15; blessing on him who watches and keeps his garments, for the Lord is coming as a thief, swiftly, suddenly.

4. xix: 9; blessing on him who is called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

5. xx: 6; blessing on him who has part in the first resurrection.

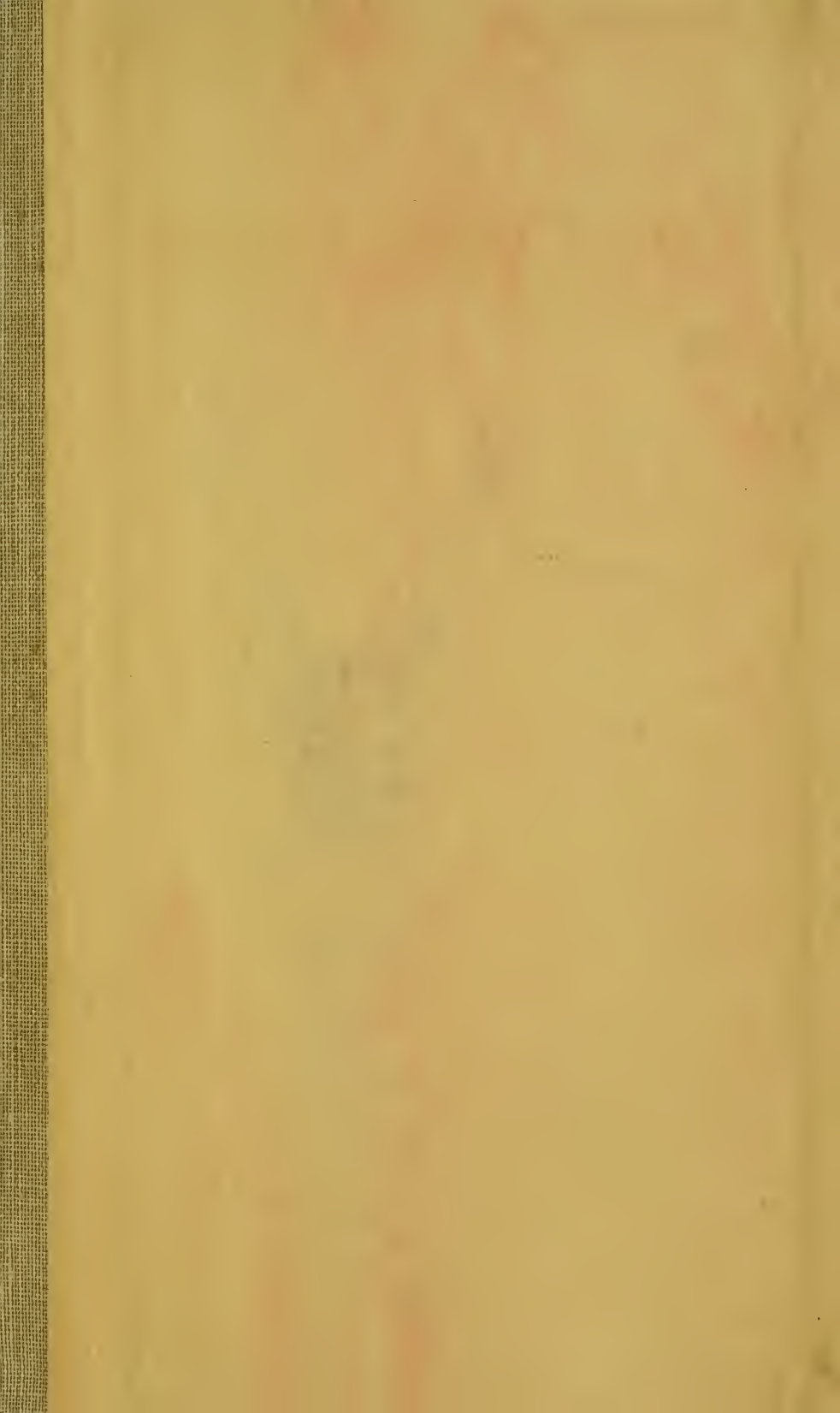
6. xxii: 7; blessing on him who keeps the sayings of this book, the Lord is at hand.

7. xxii: 14; blessing on him who has washed his robes that he may enter into the Holy City, R. V.

A special woe is denounced against him who shall tamper with the book's contents, xxii: 18, 19. Words such as these are not attached to any other book of Scripture (cf. Deut. iv: 2; xii: 32), and they guard with jealous urgency its integrity, and solemnly warn against any mutilation of it; for the Apocalypse is God's, divine, perfect, closed, certified and signed not only by the apostolic name, "I John," but the far greater name, "I Jesus." It is attested as no other is in all the Bible. How reverently and honestly and earnestly it should be read and studied.

Date Due

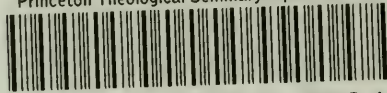
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